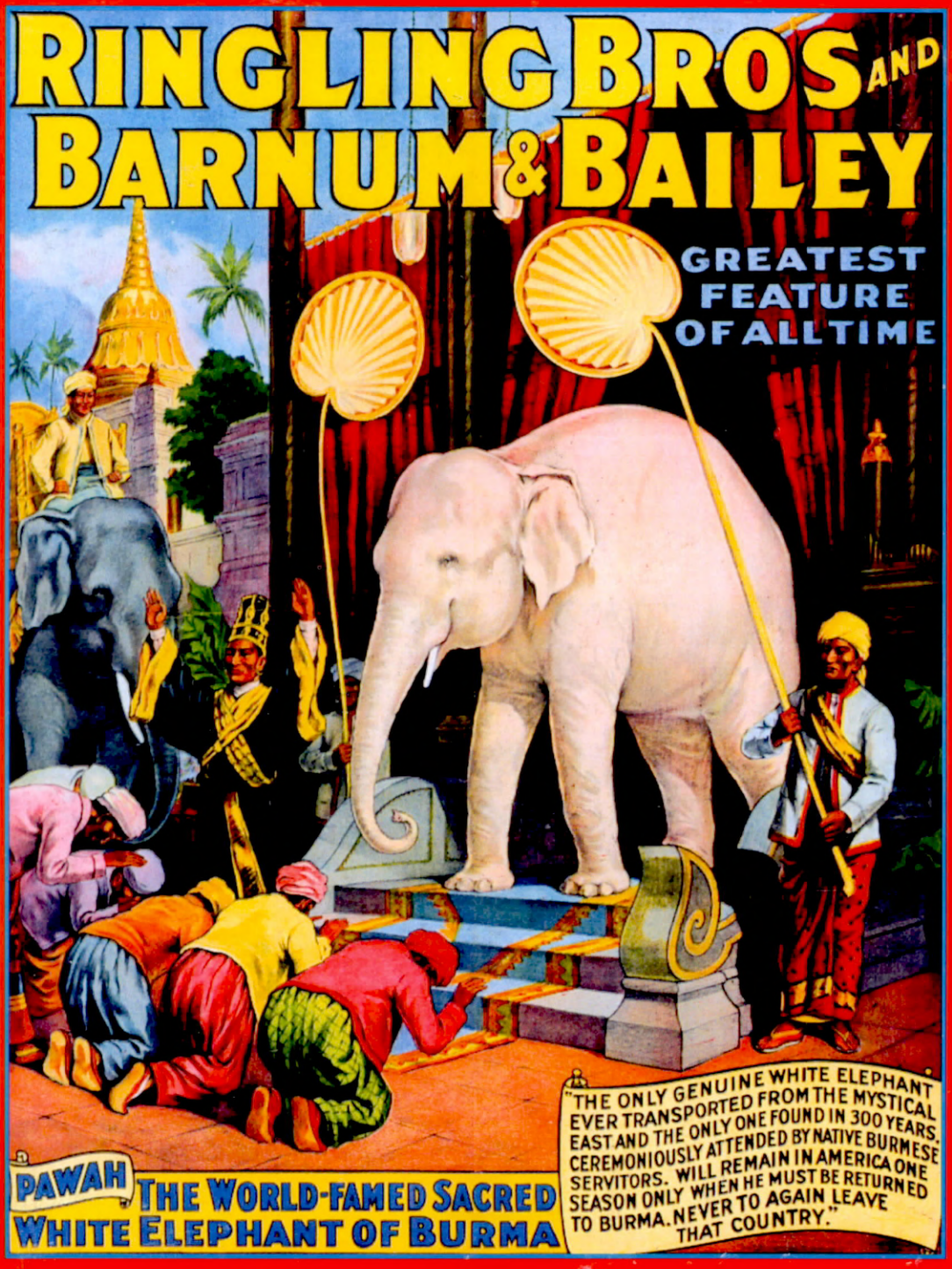
BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JULY - AUGUST 2002



BANDWAGON
THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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THE FRONT COVER

The feature of the 1927 Ringling Bros. Barnum Circus was Pawah, the white elephant from Burma. The lithograph is from the Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

THE BACK COVER

This is the front cover of the 1912 Miller Bros. & Arlington Real Wild West courier.

The show opened in California and played Berkeley on April 26. Pfening Archives.

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CORRECTION

The Frank A. Robbins installment in the May-June *Bandwagon* identified the featured rider as Dave Costello. The correct spelling is of the name is Castello. The Costello spelling came from *Billboard* and *Clipper* references.

This was pointed out by riding historian Dan Draper.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Each time the *Bandwagon* is mailed a number of copies are returned by the post office because of address changes.

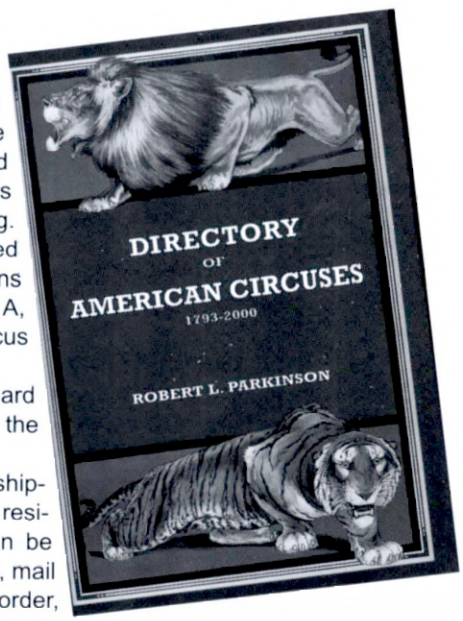
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NOW AVAILABLE

For 35 years Bob Parkinson cataloged America's circuses. He added titles and years as he found references. Following his death his work was updated by his son Greg. The result is this cross-referenced 452 page book. The listing contains titles from the 1956 A. G. V. A, Circus to Zoyara's Equiotator Circus in 1863.

You can now purchase this hard bound book from its publisher the Circus World Museum.

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CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
TREASURER'S REPORT 2001-2002

INCOME:			EXPENSES:		
Dues	$ 29,949.00		Bandwagon Printing	35,966.78	
Subscriptions	1,925.00		Bandwagon Addressing	3,983.44	
Gifts	3,031.00		Bandwagon Postage	2,100.00	
Auction	3,388.00		Sec/Treas Expense	3,110.07	
Advertising	2,100.04		Convention(s)	8,263.30	
Back Issues	1,454.00		CPA	2,120.00	
Convention(s)	9,125.00		State of Ohio Tax	125.00	
Royalties	175.53				2,245.00
Interest:			Refunds	500.00	
Savings.	974.09		Bank Charges	193.25	
CD's	10,001.91				
	10.97600		Total		$ 56,361.84
Total	$ 62,123.57				

RECAP:

Opened 2001-2002		$ 160,923.50
	Income	62,123.57
	Less expenses	-56,361,84
We close the year with		$166,685.23
	On Hand;	
	Savings Acct;	$ 39,062.74
	Chk Acct:	7,963.84
	5th 3rd Bank	930.22
CDs		118,728.43
Total		$166,685.23

Chilly Billy

The Evolution of a Circus Millionaire

W. W. Cole, the son of contortionist William Cole and wire-walker Mary Ann Cooke, grew up in the close-knit world of the circus. His awareness of the business began at an early age as he encountered nearly every phase of show activity. His 16 years of sole proprietorship began when he was barely in his 20s, but at his retirement from it he was a model for his contemporaries.



Books are available in hard cover only at $20. Add $5 for mailing. Limited copies available. The Circus Historical Society members who attend the annual meeting at Toronto will be receiving a complimentary copy. Send checks to William L. Slout, 2995 Ladera Road, San Bernardino, California 92405. For more information E-mail wslout@aol.com or call [909] 882-8938.

Paperbacks of *Clowns and Cannons* and *Grand Entrée* are still available.
$15 each, add $5 mailing for up to two copies.

GREAT AMERICAN RIDERS

2. Eaton Stone, "The Devil Rider."

By Stuart Thayer

A lawyer in Burlington, Vermont, in the early nineteenth century, David Stone, had not one, but two sons run away from home in that time-honored pursuit, to join the circus. Not willing to accept this, the father twice brought the elder brother, Eaton Stone, back to Burlington before giving up, and allowing him to be apprenticed to Nathan Howes. Dennison, the younger son by six years, soon bolted himself, also to Howes, and because of the battle already fought by the elder brother, was allowed to remain with the venerable showman.

Eaton was born in 1818, and caught on with Howes in 1831. The first time he ran away was in 1828, at the behest of a traveling ventriloquist, and his father had to sue the man for kidnapping in order to reclaim the boy. It was after another adventure with an unknown circus that Stone, senior relented. Dennison, born in 1824, joined his brother in 1835. It is to the profit of circus history that father Stone finally decided that argument was hopeless, as Eaton became one of the leading riders in the country before the Civil War, and Dennison became a successful clown, and later a noted circus proprietor.

Eaton Stone said of himself, in an interview, "From early childhood I liked horses, and took to riding as naturally I suppose as young ducks do to water. I commenced in the ring at eight years of age, and enjoyed riding so much that there never was any paying necessary to make me work, and nothing could have induced me to leave off."[1] In that same interview he claimed that Howes paid him $150 a week, but this is doubtful. He described his duties as plate spinning, tumbling, and horse grooming. If he was paid at all, it was more in the realm of eight or nine dollars. Most of his public pronouncements were made when he was elderly, and like most old men he was wont to gild the lily.

Nathan Howes' 1833 troupe (later Howes & Sands) is not well-documented, there being but three known dates in the whole season, and it was not until 1903 that it was known that Eaton Stone had been a member.[2] This length of time could indicate an error in identification, as George Stone was a clown with that company.



Eaton Stone as subject of an English poster around 1851. Harvard Theatre Collection.

In 1834 and 1835 Eaton was with Buckley, Weeks & Co., a large show for the time, and the participants in which were correctly identified by Stone in one of his interviews. These proved to be Matthew Buckley and Edward C. Weeks, proprietors, and Joseph Thompson, manager. It was possibly the largest circus of the time, having forty horses, eight wagons and thirty-five persons.[3] Names famous in future years filled its rosters. John J. Nathans, John

Robinson, James A. Rowe, William Lake, and Spencer Stokes were among the performers destined to lead their own companies in the years to come. For an apprentice to be exposed to so much talent, and thus learn a great deal about his profession would seem to be axiomatic. We know of no troupe that contributed more to the twenty years of circus history that followed than that of Buckley, Weeks & Co.

Stone observed that the rider's costumes with the circus consisted of short jackets with lace collars, knee breeches, and stockings. This was prior to the days of tights, and had been the standard since the days of John Bill Ricketts in the 1790's. Such apparel was mentioned by John Robinson as late as 1852, when he asked permission of the Connecticut Legislature to be allowed to perform in that State.

Nate Howes had a one-year connection with the Zoological Institute in 1835, but like Aron Turner, apparently chafed under the supervision of menagerie men, and returned to operating a circus without a menagerie. For 1836 he framed "The Eagle Circus," William Delavan, manager. Nate's younger brothers, Seth B. and Wilson Howes, were with it, as was Richard Sands. Among the five apprentices with the company were Eaton Stone, and his brother Dennison. That first season Delavan toured New York and New Jersey, and produced a winter show for three months in Baltimore. This was one of the first circuses in which the seating surrounded the ring. It was also one of three troupes using the name "Eagle."

Ben Brown was the ringmaster, and the man in charge of the apprentices. According to Eaton Stone, Brown let the boy ride one of Seth B. Howes' horses surreptitiously. Howes caught him at it one morning, and suggested he stick to plate spinning.

Delavan gave way to Ira Cole for the 1837 road season, in which the circus went into Ohio and Kentucky. It was the first tour in the West for a Howes troupe, and Eaton Stone's first season out of apprenticeship. Wilson Howes assured the boy that he'd make a fine rider, and proved to be prophetic when Eaton gained a place on the program in Lexington. In September, the title was changed to Cole & Co. Western Circus. In October, in Cincinnati, Dennison Stone, still an apprentice, also saw his name on the bills.

Cole took the company into St. Louis where he combined it with the menagerie and circus of Miller, Yale & Sands. This company had traveled in Illinois and Missouri during 1837. It was the first troupe to advertise in trans-Mississippi Missouri outside St. Louis. They ended their season in Fairfield, Illinois, and then marched 110 miles to St. Louis, a week's journey, to appear with Cole from 21 November to 20 December.[4] The managers of Miller, Yale & Sands were John Miller, Enoch C. Yale, and Richard Sands. The combined force was titled Cole, Miller, Yale & Co.

Richard Sands was the equestrian manager, George Stone the clown, Harvey Whitlock the bareback rider, and Napoleon and Timothy Turner the pad riders. They had a cage of cat animals (one lion, one tiger) in which a keeper entered to begin each performance, but his name was not disclosed.[5] It might have been John Shaffer. An unknown female elephant under the care of Agrippa Martin was also part of the group. For such a large circus (we count eleven performers plus five apprentices) to appear in the West made sense in a city the size of St. Louis (population, 5,852 in 1830), but for the small towns of Illinois and Missouri such a caravan was overwhelming. Thus, the company was split in 1838. Ira Cole's name was dropped after St. Louis, and Yale, Sands & Co. became the title through most of 1838, later appearing as Miller, Yale & Howes. The persistence of Enoch Yale's name indicates he was financially interested, though no mention of him was otherwise made. And it's very possible that the Howes in the title was Seth B., not Nathan.



An image from the English poster. Harvard Theatre Collection.

The division into two companies occurred in St. Louis in May, 1838. Richard Sands took Whitlock, Den Stone, John Shaffer and the leopard den, plus six others to northern Illinois and Michigan under the title H. A. Woodward & Co. Woodward, mentioned nowhere prior to this, was an agent for the Mabie brothers in the early fifties.

Seth B. Howes took the rest of the St. Louis company into rural Iowa. Eaton Stone was now doing a principal act in addition to his plate spinning turn, John May was the clown, Seth Howes and J. W. Jackson were the pad riders.

We mentioned the task of translating some of Stone's memories in light of other facts known to us, and the most confusing aspect of his career are remarks he made concerning 1838 and 1839. Yale, Sands & Co. was in Jefferson City, Missouri in May, 1838, and Fort Madison, Iowa, in late August. Stone says they played Fort Gibson (Arkansas then, Oklahoma now), and that they charged one dollar admission. Fort Gibson was one of those places referred to as a site of "Indian payments," where 3 million dollars was disbursed to the displaced tribes. Such a bounty was a perfect place for a circus to play. This must have been in the summer of 1838. Oddly, no one else mentioned this seeming bonanza.

Stone says he then went to the Cross Timbers in Texas, and on to Chihuahua, Mexico. There is nothing in the record that indicates such a trip by the Howes show, and it may be that Stone was traveling alone. He

claimed that Indians (Commanches, apparently) kept him captive for most of a year, and that he escaped by stealing a fast pony and riding to the settlements on the Red River. This episode concurs with his absence from any roster in 1839.[6] In reporting such adventures, we are somewhat at the mercy of the newspaper writer, whose ability to transcribe Stone's statements could well have been faulty. As an example, the unnamed scribe in Buffalo wrote that Stone was the first man to perform a somersault on a barebacked horse, which we know to be untrue.

Stone later credited the Indians with teaching him "riding tricks no white man knew, and therefore I made a sensation for years in the Indian act on a wild prairie horse.@ Apparently, part of the fascination he had for the Indians were conjuring tricks he had learned as a boy when he traveled with the ventriloquist, the man his father sued. Another part was his ability to ride wild horses. He had shown such an aptitude back when he traveled with Buckley, Weeks & Co.

"I learned fast riding during my three (sic) years' life with the Comanche Indians in Texas.

I required a very fast-going horse, and no one has ever ridden faster than I."[7] His claim of being three years with the Indians doesn't square with the facts, as we found them.

Indian acts were the most common of the scenic acts seen in the early nineteenth century circus. Introduced in 1826 by Sam Tatnall, and soon a part of most programs, this turn involved a rider, dressed appropriately, performing a pantomime of Indian habits, such as hunting and warfare. Tatnall called his "Indian Hunter," but it had many names over the years, including "Flying Indian," "Indian War Dance," and "Indian Chief." William Blanchard, William Harrington, Alec Jackson, and Seth B. Howes were all early riders who presented the act. Its popularity lasted into the mid-1850's, and was the first manifestation of arenic interest in Native Americans.

Stone changed the Indian act by turning it into a wild affair, with a galloping horse on which he rode bareback, emitting war whoops. He dressed in beaded costumes, which he claimed Indian women had made for him, and wore facial paint. Previous scenic acts had been much more tame, moved at a canter, and had only costume to mark them as being of Indian origin.


Thayer, Noyes and Co.'s
GREAT
United States Circus.

With the Largest and Best Troupe of Performers, Musicians, Ring and Trick Horses, Ponies, and Mules ever brought together, making this company the most complete, diversified and unparalleled establishment on the Western Continent, with everything Novel, Original and Newly Equipped for the season of 1862, under the special supervision of the managing proprietors, Messrs. THAYER & NOYES, whose discipline and tact have elevated this class of amusements to a standard of Eloquence, Refinement and Perfection,

WILL EXHIBIT AT ASHTABULA,
Saturday, July 19, both Afternoon and Night.

Admission to all parts of the Pavilion, 25 Cents—No Half Price.

In this unparalleled collection of

STAR EQUESTRIENNES,	STAR EQUESTRIANS,
STAR ACROBATS,	STAR GYMNASTS,
STAT CLOWNS,	STAR HORSES,

WILL BE FOUND

Mr. James Robinson,

THE NONPAREIL HORSEMAN!

Equally renowned for his Classical and Daring act of Equitation, which first developed in America, afterwards invested him with the title of Champion of Europe, and the undisputed Bare-Back Rider of the World, is now the Bright Particular Star of this Colossal Exhibiton,

Mr. Eaton Stone!

a gentleman whose Unapproachable Skill and Grace have delighted the Largest and most Fashionable Audiences in every part of the Civilized World, and who has been engaged at an immense expense to give eclat to the Exhibition, such as cannot be found elsewhere.

Messrs. Hogle and Keefe,

The American Acrobats, whose acts vary the scene from severe to lively by their truly Humorous Displays, as the "Twins of Momus," or the "Dabes of the Humerous Deity."

This 1862 United States Circus ad mentioned Eaton Stone, Pfening Archives.

Later in his career he was called "The Devil Rider," and he had a horse to match the description. Named "Selim," the beast had been broken by Stone and only he could ride it. It was supposedly the fastest horse in the circus ring, and would not move at anything less than a gallop. Stone had to mount the animal in the stall, and ride into the ring at breakneck speed.

Once there, the rider would stand on the horse, leap to ground and back, do a head stand, and, because of the animal's speed, seem to stick to its flanks.

The audience, just a few feet from the ring curb, was justifiably alarmed by these antics, a wild horse with a wild rider. People were known to move away from their seats, fearing that Selim might cast a shoe, but he never did, though on occasion he was known to bolt over the ring fence into the seats. At the conclusion of the act, Stone did not dismount, but had to ride the horse into his stall before it would halt. Historically, Stone was anticipating the later-famous "jockey acts," and the introduction of the "finish horse."

Free of his Indian captors, Stone went from the Red River to Little Rock, Arkansas. There he joined one of James Raymond's units, sometime in the summer of 1840. This company was under the management of D. R. Lines (Stone spells it "Lyons."). His brother Dennison was the clown with this troupe. Lemuel Word, or Ward, was the equestrian director, Eaton Stone the bareback rider, two pad riders, Jones and Conklin, and Thomas McCollum, apprentice rider. But the big feature with the company was the elephant Columbus. There were also five cages of wild animals. "Took in heaps of money," Stone stated, and credited it to the presence of the elephant, perhaps only the second one seen in the Mississippi Valley.

If, as Stone reported, this circus and menagerie went into Texas, it was one of the first to do so. No show advertisements are seen there until 1851. James Raymond had two of his three 1840 menagerie-circus combinations in the South. These were D. R. Lines & Co., and what was called

Grand Caravan of Living Animals (a generic title), managed by J. L. Humphrey. Lines had Columbus, as we said, and Humphrey had Bolivar. The two caravans were combined in Algiers,Louisiana, prior to crossing the river to New Orleans as one entity. It was here that Columbus went berserk, attacking Bolivar, killed Bolivar's keeper, George Crumb, broke up a cage, and lunged at spectators.

"Lem Word and I saved several children by throwing them down an embankment," Stone reported. "Over 100 men with shotguns followed Columbus thirty miles down the coast, and peppered his hide with shot." George Graver, the keeper, finally recaptured the animal in a swamp. They opened the combined show on 25 February at St. Charles and Poydras Streets, in New Orleans, with Columbus in leg chains. Thousands of people paid a dollar each to see him.

The show went east in April, 1841, but the Stone brothers did not accompany it.

That same winter, 1840-1841, Ludlow and Smith, the theatrical producers, added a circus troupe to their company, which opened in the American Theater in New Orleans 19 November 1840. John Robinson was in charge of these performers, which included Master James Hernandez, the eight-year old wonder, Barney Carroll, William Lake and Gilbert Eldred.

Eaton and Den Stone joined this troupe at least as early as March, 1841. Eaton did his plate spinning (called "Grecian Exercises" in the ads), and rode the scenic Indian act. The equestrians were sent off on their own, once the Raymond menageries closed, and traveled to Mobile, Alabama, where they were joined by Fogg & Stickney's circus. Their route led to St. Louis, then to Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and back to New Orleans, and finally to the last three days of the year in Mobile. February, 1842, was spent in Havana, Cuba, and the troupe was disbanded in March in New Orleans.

In April, 1842, John Robinson and Joseph Foster organized their first circus, called The National Circus Co., for which they hired the Stones, Gilbert Eldred, Juan Hernandez, Spencer Stokes, and Rosaline Stickney. Sam Stickney was the equestrian director. The circus played the cities on the Mississippi and the Ohio, beginning and ending in New Orleans. The 1843 season was spent in Alabama, Tennessee, and in a return to Mobile.

In August, 1843 Sam Stickney resigned to organize his own company, opening in Lexington, Kentucky on 2 August. He took his daughter, Rosaline, and the Stone brothers with him, and hired a dozen other performers, which made his the largest show in the West that season. Much of the 1844 tour consisted of long stands in Ohio River cities. In

This 1864 Stone, Rosston & Co. ad listed Eaton Stone. Pfening Archives.



August, 1844, Matt Buckley became Stickney's partner, and the Stone brothers seem to have resigned at that time. They were not listed in the roster of Stickney & Buckley's troupe in the winter show in New Orleans, but Eaton was the bareback rider for Stickney (now sole proprietor again) in the 1845 tour of the same river towns.

Den Stone and Thomas McCollum framed a new circus in 1846, a propitious year in which to do so, as business was good, especially in the West. This was partly because of the awareness of that part of the country brought about by the War with Mexico. There were four large circuses (relatively speaking) west of the Ohio, and all of them prospered. New lands, new villages, and new settlers contributed to the boom in the equestrian arts.

Stone & McCollum's Great Western Circus was organized in New Orleans, where they chartered a steamboat, the Franklin, loaded seventy employees on it, and went upriver to the opening date, Cincinnati, on 23 April. Eaton and Den Stone both presented bareback scenic acts, but McCollum was the featured rider. He threw six backward somersaults over a canvas during a single run about the ring, "his splendid steed running with the velocity of a rail car." as the *Pittsburgh Morning Post* observed.[8] The company went up and down the Ohio, up to St. Louis and down to New Orleans where they presented a three-month winter show.

Stone & McCollum operated for four successful seasons, 1846 through 1849, and Eaton Stone was with them until mid-season, 1849. It was in 1846 that he married Elizabeth Radcliff, a non-professional of Fredericksburg, Virginia. They were together for fifty years.

Eaton was advertised as "the greatest bareback rider in the world, justly acknowledged so by the elite, and the profession generally," in 1848. Deciding who was and who was not a bareback rider in the 1840's is a difficult task. The reason is that no particular distinction was made between the two methods; one was not considered as requiring more aptitude than the other until some time after the Rebellion. For instance, Levi J. North, arguably the greatest rider in the world in pre-bellum days, always used a pad. We can only identify three bareback riders in 1848, when the above statement was

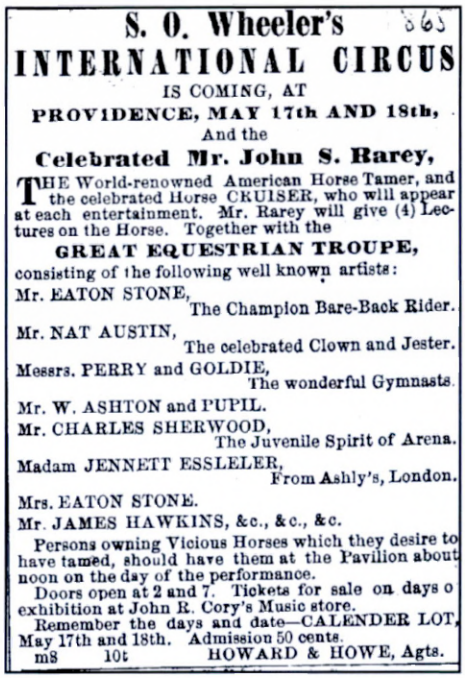
used. These were John Glenroy, W. B. (Barney) Carroll, and Eaton Stone. There were probably others, but they didn't announce themselves as such. Scenic riding, made famous by the great Andrew Ducrow, was the ne plus ultra of riding arts at the time.

Having spent twelve years in the West, Stone decided to test himself before eastern audiences in 1850. He was accepted as one of the leading artists on the Mississippi, earned a good salary (over $100 a week) plus his horse expense, but even greater awards seemingly awaited him in the big cities.

Rufus Welch was the leading circus proprietor in America at the time. He had two troupes (Welch's National Circus and Welch, Delavan & Nathans), and dominated New York and Pennsylvania, as well as the winter show scene in Philadelphia. Welch hired Stone for his winter show at the National Theater, November, 1849, through March, 1850, as well as forth summer touring season. He advertised the Indian act as "The Warrior of the Wilds," and gave him the penultimate spot on the program. Sam Stickney, and the Derious and Rivers families also participated. Welch described Stone's contribution in this way: "This extraordinary equestrian, of whose skill and daring volumes have been written wherever he has performed, appears in two distinct acts of horsemanship, in neither of which does he use saddle or bridle on his superb steeds, though they are both as wild and untamable as when he first lassood (sic) them."

During Welch's 1850-1851 winter show in Philadelphia, Stone rode in opposition to performances by both Jenny Lind and Edwin Forrest, and claimed he drew more money nightly than they did.[9] On 5 May 1851, Welch sent Stone to England in what was to be a three-year venture. Levi J. North had done the same thing twice in the period 1838 to 1843 and was received with acclaim by the Europeans. Stone's experience was to find himself at least as popular abroad as he was at home.

Welch agreed to pay Stone half the receipts of the tour, and to provide for Mrs. Stone, and a groom, and two horses. He opened at the Drury Lane



S. O. Wheeler's 565

INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS

IS COMING, AT

PROVIDENCE, MAY 17th AND 18th,

And the

Celebrated Mr. John S. Rarey,

THE World-renowned American Horse Tamer, and the celebrated Horse CRUISER, who will appear at each entertainment. Mr. Rarey will give (4) Lectures on the Horse. Together with the

GREAT EQUESTRIAN TROUPE,

consisting of the following well known artists:

Mr. EATON STONE,
The Champion Bare-Back Rider.

Mr. NAT AUSTIN,
The celebrated Clown and Jester.

Messrs. PERRY and GOLDIE,
The wonderful Gymnasts.

Mr. W. ASHTON and PUPIL.

Mr. CHARLES SHERWOOD,
The Juvenile Spirit of Arena.

Madam JENNETT ESSLELER,
From Ashly's, London.

Mrs. EATON STONE.

Mr. JAMES HAWKINS, &c., &c., &c.

Persons owning Vicious Horses which they desire to have tamed, should have them at the Pavilion about noon on the day of the performance.

Doors open at 2 and 7. Tickets for sale on days o exhibition at John R. Cory's Music store.

Remember the days and date—CALENDER LOT, May 17th and 18th. Admission 50 cents.

m8 10t HOWARD & HOWE, Agts.

The 1865 S. O. Wheeler International Circus listed Eaton Stone in the performance. Pfening Archives.

Theater in London, and the receipts were the largest at that hall in thirty-one years on the occasion of his benefit at the end a four-week stand. Stone's daring work and the savage methods he had learned from the Indians thrilled English audiences.

"I used to scare the wits out of the Englishmen," Stone reported, "for I would let Selim loose when a rough crowd got too near the ropes. Sometimes the horse would take a shoot into the crowd . . . and the bullies would scatter in all directions."[10] It was not unusual for persons to tip Stone's groom half a crown to see the horse in the stable.

From London he went to Dublin, Liverpool, Glasgow, and other cities. Two English showmen offered to bankroll a circus for him, and give him a third of the receipts, but he went home in 1855. The *London Times* said of him that he was the best bareback rider ever seen in that city.

For the next four seasons, Stone rode for the Raymond interests. James Raymond had died in 1853, and his heirs, the wives of Chauncey Weeks and J. J. Drake continued the firm. The title in 1855 was Van Amburgh, Stone & Tyler, which was a menagerie, Den Stone's Circus and Tyler's Indian Exhibition. In 1856 it was Herr Driesbach & Co. In 1857, Van Amburgh Menagerie and Circus Co. In 1858, Van Amburgh's Zoological and Equestrian Co. In two of those years, 1855 and 1856, Stone and Tyler were attached for winter tours in the South to the Mabie brothers' show, and Eaton accompanied them. "The one great horseman of the world," was the manner in which the Raymond firm advertised him.

James Melville, the great Australian rider, joined Van Amburgh in 1858, and this might have been the reason Stone transferred to Sands, Nathans & Co. for 1859. But he was back with The Great Van Amburgh Show in St. Louis for their opening stand in 1860.

He then did an unusual thing. He removed to Kansas, as did his brother, Den. He wrote the *New York Clipper,* which published a letter from him on 9 February 1861, saying that the paper hadn't heard from him in ten months, and that he had collected and was training a herd of buffalo. On 23 March, the *Clipper* announced that Stone was about to tour with his buffalo herd.

He arrived in New York on 19 April, and proceeded to drive ten buffalo in tandem up Broadway to Harlem. He exhibited the brutes at Jones' Woods in New York until August, when they were placed with Nixon & Sloat's circus in Brooklyn. By 23 November all the buffalos had died, and it was hinted later that they had been poisoned.

Stone and his brother then became performers for S. P. Stickney at the Bowery Theater.

In 1862, Eaton was with Thayer & Noyes, where he appeared with two of the more talented riders of the age, John Glenroy and James Robinson. Here was a contrast in age, Stone being forty-four, Glenroy thirty-four, and Robinson twenty-four. It was also a contrast in style; Stone presenting his "Wild Horseman" act; Glenroy depending on his ability as a somersault rider; Robinson outdoing both at everything.

In October, 1862, James Thayer and Eaton Stone opened in Washington, D. C. with Nixon's

Cremorne Garden Circus, named after the London pleasure garden. Nixon dubbed Stone "The Wizard Horseman . . . he ranks at the head of equestrians, and never fails to startle, electrify, and please. . . ." Stone stayed the next season with Nixon, and was said to perform on a bare-backed horse carrying "his son" on his head. This may have been Willie Carroll, an apprentice of Barney Carroll, who was also with Nixon. Barney was an originator of the head carry. Stone had no apprentices that we know of at that time.

Nixon lauded Stone by declaring him the acknowledged "best horseman that has ever entered the arena."[11] Nixon was trying to sell tickets, of course, but the honor shines through the verbiage.

Dennison Stone and Frank Rosston framed what was to be a long-running circus, Stone, Rosston & Co. in 1864, (later, Stone, Rosston & Murray), and decided to head the bills with brother Eaton. He was with the new concern only in its first year, and it would be of interest to know why he left. He might well have lost a step or two, despite his ability; Stone was forty-eight years old in that year.

In 1865 he caught on with the S. O. Wheeler circus, a Boston firm then in its second season. This was definitely a second-class concern. For much of the spring it featured horse-taming presentations by the famed John Rarey, an unusual act for a circus. Besides Stone's, the only well-known names on the roster were the clown Nat Austin, and the rider Charles Sherwood. Austin was still at the peak of his career, but Sherwood was forty, his salad days behind him.

In April, 1866, Stone boarded the steamboat Marietta as a member of Mike Lipman's Colossal Combination of Circus and Menagerie, framed in Evansville, Indiana. He was given first place in a roster filled with well-known names including Hiram Marks, Henry Ruggles, the Holland family, Spencer Stokes, and Grizzly Adam's bears. The circus floated up the Ohio and up and down the Mississippi before turning into the Wabash, and later, the Cumberland. This was Stone's last effort.

His retirement was announced in the 25 May 1867 *New York Clipper*, which added that he, "for many years has enjoyed a reputation as the most daring rider of the age, and even now there are but few able to excel him in the performance of those feats which have made his name famous in nearly all parts of the world."



Eaton Stone at 83, wearing the costume made for him by Indian women about 1839. It is the only photograph found of the rider. From the *Buffalo Evening Express* in 1901.

"I thought it was time (to retire), and because I could afford to," Stone explained in 1886. He had begun to save his money in the 1840's, and being highly paid, had accumulated a small fortune in the subsequent thirty years. Commodore Vanderbilt took care of his money, as did the Commodore's son and grandson in subsequent years. Most of it was invested in real estate, of which at one time he owned 2500 acres in various parts of the country.[12] Stone, unlike so many of his contemporaries who gained fame in the circle, never invested in circuses, which was the downfall of so many performers over the years. The only bad investment we know of was the loss of $10,000 in his ill-fated investment in the buffalo herd in 1861.

He bought a farm near Nutley, New Jersey, where he took pride in his fruit trees and vast lawns. Later, a brownstone quarry was discovered on the property which further enriched him. He built a training barn at Nutley, and allowed performers to use it for practice for some twenty-five years. Here he rented rooms, a ring barn, and stalls.

They called him "The Devil Rider," in Cuba, and never was an equestrian more aptly named. He died in Nutley on 8 August 1903, and his obituary in the Clipper was typical of the encomiums that he had received in a forty-year performing career: "In daring, Eaton Stone was unsurpassed, and his act, which was accomplished upon a barebacked steed, was wild and fearful. He would urge his horse to do his utmost speed, and without saddle or bridle, sometimes standing on the back of the animal, and sometimes seated upon his flanks, holding on, one scarcely knew how, he careened around the arena with a velocity almost painful to look at."[13]

Notes:

1. *Chicago Tribune,* 28 September 1886.
2. *New York Clipper,* 15 August 1903.
3. *Duluth Herald,* (MN), 1 February 1904.
4. "Thomas Bennett Diary," Harvard Theater Library.
5. Eliza W. Farnham, *Life in Prairie Land,* (University of Illinois, Chicago, 1988).
6. *Illustrated Buffalo Express,* (NY), 6 October 1901.
7. *Chicago Tribune,* op. cit.
8. *Morning Post,* (Pittsburgh), 3 May 1846.
9. *Duluth Herald,* op. cit.
10. Ibid.
11. *National Intelligencer,* (Washington, D. C.), 23 October 1862.
12. *Chicago Tribune,* op. cit.
13. *New York Clipper,* op. cit.

Getting the Show on the Road

Contracting A Circus In 1901

By John Polacsek

This paper was presented at the 2001 Circus Historical Society convention.

The life of a circus general agent is not as easy as some would claim. Being responsible for the 'front end' booking dates, securing lots and permission from local political entities, as well was looking after the billposters is a demanding job. Through detailed agent's reports we are able to look into a slice of life on the road in advance of this early mud show.

Samuel H. Westfall met with the owners of the Goodrich Shows, James Goodrich, Louis Hoffman and Al Southey in late March of 1901. This one ring circus was incorporated in the State of Connecticut, and an old factory was rented in Bridgeport where practice sessions were under way. Some equipment and the wagons from the defunct Price and James Circus were combined with the existing Goodrich Circus mud show, all being made ready for the upcoming season. An agreement was made and entered into on March 21, 1901 between the Goodrich Shows, the party of the first part, and Samuel H. Westfall party of the second part. Sam was responsible to render his services to the show commencing on or about the 10th of April 1901, and to continue only as long as agreeable to both parties of this contract, but in no case longer than the end of the traveling season of 1901.

The said services consisted of the duties of contracting agent, and to make himself generally useful for the which the show contracts his ability, properly, satisfactorily, correctly, and in a painstaking manner he was to perform. For doing his job Sam was to be paid per week for such services rendered the sum of $15.00 and the customary board and transportation. Sam also agreed that the show may without notice whatever, dismiss and discharge him whenever he shall in the opinion of the owners be guilty of drunkenness, fighting, stealing, gambling, card playing, or any unlawful or improper conduct, or whenever he shall associate or consort with any improper person. Two weeks salary will be held back as a guarantee of good faith, and two weeks notice must be given before leaving the show.

Sam left a vivid accounting of his experiences on the road ahead of the show in the form of agent's reports, which were included with contracts and licenses that were sent to the show treasurer Mr. A.G. Southey.

To A.G. Southey from Ansania, Conn. April 8, 1901: "Enclosed please find contracts for Ansania, Ct. I have not sent any bill contracts--reasons I am getting private bill boards for tickets. The New Haven Bill Posting Company have bought all boards belonging to the Opera House of Ansoria. The Opera house manager of Derby has some boards here and I will try and cabbage his boards and let the New Haven Bill Posting Co. slide, I don't want to give up any cash for Bill Boards if I can help it. The License is $10.00 and the Chief of Police was powerless to lower the same, the lot they wanted $10.00 & I stuck for $5.00 then after chewing the rag for an hour we split the difference $7.50. It's a good lot, sod and a good ring already built. Sautelle made it last season. Hay and oats are high here, one paper here (daily) I will attend to that when I bill here.

To A. G. Southey from Waterbury, Conn. April 9, 1901:

"We do not show Seymore, Conn, Why! The Brookway lot has changed hands, a Dr. Strupp has it and would not let me have it for love or money, and then I tried to get the ball ground that belongs to the city. It was donated to the town of Seymore, with this proviso that no exhibition be allowed on the ground that charges a fee. No other lot to be had, after spending the day there I left and came to Naugatuck only one hotel then rates $2.00 per day and no less so I took a trolley and went to Waterbury to stay the night. I will go back to Naugatuck in the morning and make the town. My Naugatuck letter will give particulars of the town.

To A. G. Southey from Naugatuck, Conn. April 10,1901:

"Enclosed please find contracts for Naugatuck, Conn. I could not



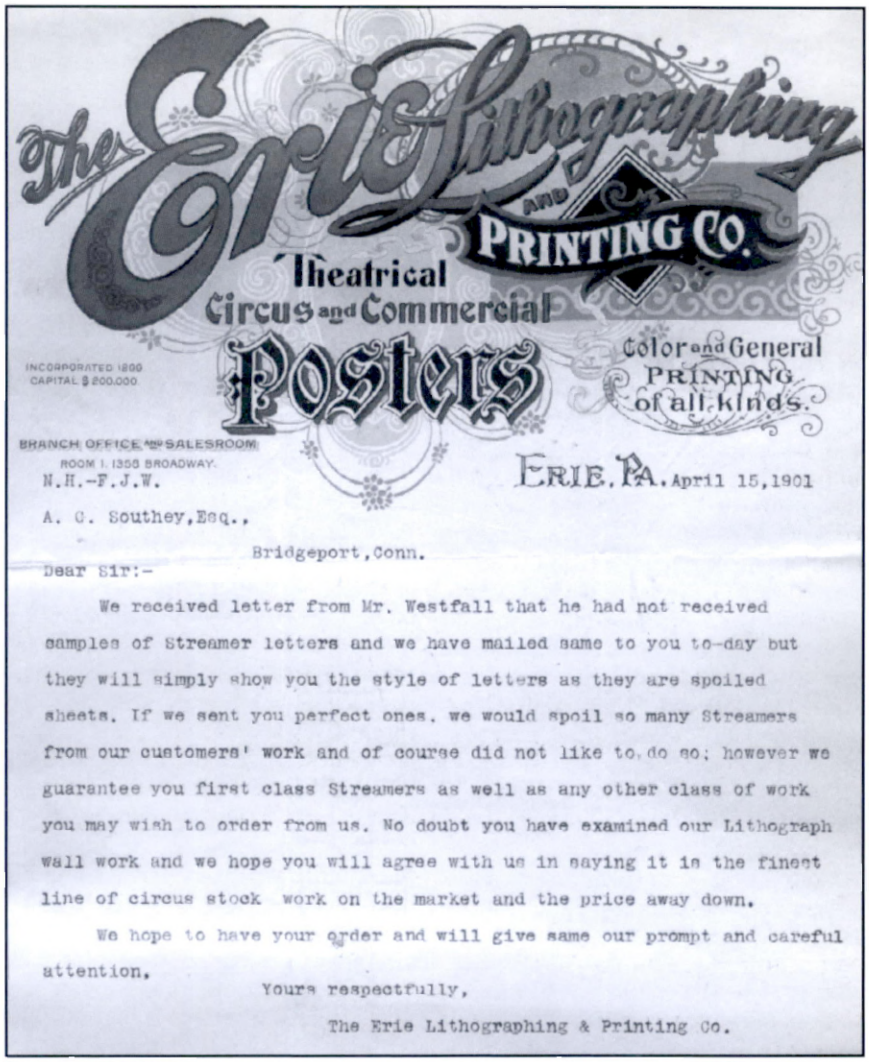
Letterhead used by Goodrich Shows in 1901. All illustrations are from author's collection.

get the lot where Goodrich showed the last time. MONEY, would not get it, then I went to Mrs. Hotchkiss who owns the ball grounds, known as the Park, they wanted $30.00, I chewed the rag for one hour and got them to split the difference $15.00, this was the only lot to be had. When you arrive in Naugatuck go at once to the City Clerk's office and square the license $10.00, then tell Harry Thurston that his license is $2.00 for Naugatuck. This is the City Ordinance and no deviation. I had to pay it or jump the town, I am in Waterbury at this writing and Dick Ball, General Agent is here of the Forepaugh-Sells Shows and they show here May 29 one month after we show here.

"On receipt of this you need to order from some firm. Look in the *Billboard* and see the parties who manufacture Paste Brushes. Don't buy of the Donaldsons, there are some others who make a better brush for the same money and order two. Fitzgerald says there is only two good brushes and we want four. Don't fail in ordering right away, and push the Erie Litho printing for the Calhun (sic) wood cuts will not draw a cut for this show. Dig a Big Circus Ring in Every town until I say not to. I will make Waterbury tomorrow.

"Will send bill and livery contract when I bill at present Don't think I will have either, tell Hoffman to have those paste cans, boilers, and pails made and you write to Gavel and tell him to only send two weeks dates, and only 150, of the 3 sheet Paragraph Bill as I will not have room. I can order from Hartford and have what I want shipped by freight to points where I am going--Don't fail in this. I will be back Fri. Eve. Or Saturday Morning."

Sam Westfall and the billing crew were ahead of the show hanging lithographs along the route and the show started April 25 at Bridgeport, Conn. The show played Ansonia 26; Naugatuck 27; Waterbury 29; Thomaston 30; Litchfield May 1; Torrington 2; Winsted Bradley 3, Collinville 4; Winsorlocks 6; Thompsonville 7; Chicopee, Mass. 8; Westfield 9; Holyoke 10; North Hampton 11; Amherst 13; Belchertown 14; Ware 15; Warren 16; North Brookfield 17; Spencer 18; Webster 19.



The Erie Lithographing AND PRINTING CO.

Theatrical Circus and Commercial Posters

Color and General PRINTING of all kinds.

INCORPORATED 1899
CAPITAL $ 200,000

BRANCH OFFICE and SALESROOM
ROOM 1, 1355 BROADWAY.

N.H.-F.J.W.

ERIE, PA. April 15, 1901

A. G. Southey, Esq.,

Bridgeport, Conn.

Dear Sir:-

We received letter from Mr. Westfall that he had not received samples of Streamer letters and we have mailed same to you to-day but they will simply show you the style of letters as they are spoiled sheets. If we sent you perfect ones, we would spoil so many Streamers from our customers' work and of course did not like to do so; however we guarantee you first class Streamers as well as any other class of work you may wish to order from us. No doubt you have examined our Lithograph wall work and we hope you will agree with us in saying it is the finest line of circus stock work on the market and the price away down.

We hope to have your order and will give same our prompt and careful attention.

Yours respectfully,

The Erie Lithographing & Printing Co.

Erie letter to Goodrich regarding shipment to Westfall.

To A. G. Southey, from Waterbury, Conn, April 11, 1901:

"Enclosed please find contracts for Waterbury. We show on the Bank Street Lot. The lot has changed hands, 3 different people own it and all have to have a slice of the $20.00 that was the possible lowest cut.

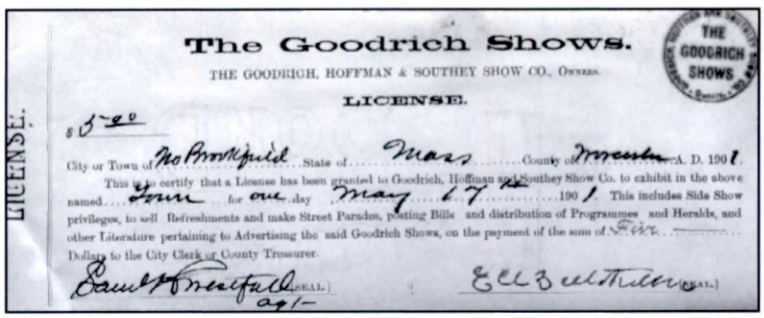
"The Forepaugh-Sells show is here May 29 and they have all the Boards in the city, they are afraid of the Wallace show which is coming East and they are trying to keep him out. The Sells show has compromised with the Ringlings not to fight this season. B. F. Wallace will fight them to a finish. The Sells go from here to Hartford, I have not closed billboard contract and will not until I come with my wagons. The Waterbury Bill Posting Co. have all boards at Naugatuck and Waterbury, they want 7 cents per sheet for 2 weeks.

We will bill 10 days ahead only, I will be through billed and I don't pay no 7 cents for two weeks either."

Sam Westfall was busy the night of April 20 and he was occupied long after the billing crew, which included Geo. Mather, Jas. Fitzgerald, Geo. Cannon, and Wm. Terry had their evening meal and were relaxing. Sam penned two letters to the owners after receiving a negative piece of correspondence, and burnt the midnight oil.

To Lew Hoffman from Waterbury, Conn. April 20, 1901-10:00 p.m.: "Will drop you a line and let you know how things are going on with the advance. I arrived here today noon with the wagons, we got dinner and commenced to get the paper up, I have a good showing for Sunday. I leave here Monday morning, would

go to Thomaston Sunday but I want the horses to rest and I am trying to cure the Gauls on the Iron Gray team. I got some Gaul cure and the medicine is drying the Gauls up and they look much better: These men I have know nothing whatever about horses, only to drive hell out of them, see the letter I wrote to Southey: I have one good bill poster that is Fitzgerald but he known nothing about laying out paper, and can not make a stand look uniform. I lay out his paper and no circus has better-looking stands made of such paper, as the Calhoun stuff. I have one stand in front of the Hotel Dayton at Ansania made of Erie paper it is fine; are you going to get the Erie paper or use the Calhoun at 4 cents. Next Wednesday I will be 9 days ahead or at least the wagons will be 9 days ahead. Don't think for a moment that a show will catch up with an advance that I have charge of.



The Goodrich Shows.

THE GOODRICH, HOFFMAN & SOUTHEY SHOW CO., Owners.

LICENSE.

$ 5-00

City or Town of No Brookfield State of Mass County of Worcester A. D. 1901

This is to certify that a License has been granted to Goodrich, Hoffman & Southey Show Co. to exhibit in the above named Town for one day May 17 1901. This includes Side Show privileges, to sell Refreshments and make Street Parades, posting Bills and distribution of Programmes and Heralds, and other Literature pertaining to Advertising the said Goodrich Shows, on the payment of the sum of Five Dollars to the City Clerk or County Treasurer.

Paul J. Westfall (SEAL) ag't

Ell Bell Miller (SEAL)

LICENSE.

THE GOODRICH SHOWS

Contract issue by Westfall.

"You know I only had ten days paper, I may be able to string it out to twelve days but don't think I can. You can see by the lists I send Southey that it averages over 400 a day and I only had 200 sheets from Calhoun; I expect to have to wait for paper or at least the wagons will. Southey tells me to get a hustle on me or the show will catch me. The hustle wants to be back with the show and have paper ready.

"I have one man I'm going to dump. If I continue as advance agent, I don't want any drones around me, and don't want a man that has not brains to favor his team; only to drive hell out of the; the team is a good team; and by good and careful driving they will soon be in good condition. I make them get out and walk up the hills; my buggy horse is not a fast one, but he gets there just the same; he has a steady jog, one thing I like about the horses when we stop to bill a board or barn, they will stand without watching. I will close and would like to hear from you individually and address me at Torrington, Conn. A. L. Blodgett of the New Haven Bill Posting Company and Parsons of the Waterbury Posting Company says I have the best and handiest bill wagon they ever saw. Let me hear from you.

To A. G. Southey from Waterbury, Conn. April 20, 1901-11p.m.: "Your favor of the 19th to hand, contents noted that I must get a hustle on me or the show would pass me; I should have left Bridgeport last Monday morning but when the proprietors failed to have the wagons ready also paper and paste cans and kept me there 4 days, then start out 6 days ahead of the show with circus paper in single sheets; which takes as long again to put up as paper pasted together; Then tell me to hustle, or the show will pass me, I have a great deal to do with a lot of inexperienced men, I have to lay out the paper and direct the putting of it up. No show was ever better billed and paper put up better; Fitzgerald is a good bill poster but he knows nothing of laying out paper. The Boy is a good lithographer. This city has a good showing for (Sunday) tomorrow.

"I have two horses with galled shoulders, all these bill posters know of horses is to drive them through from town to town, and the horses cant stand it if the wagon is heavy loaded. Today noon, the drivers put the horses in the stable when we arrived here. He never took the harness off, 2:30. I went to the stable and found the harness on, the Iron Gray team. I made a row about it & told him he must see to the horses hereafter. I am doctoring the Galls & will fix sweat collars to protect the Galls and get them healed up and the horses shall not be driven hard.

"From the tone of your letter something tells me that my work don't suit. If such is the case, kindly get another agent to take my place; I will have Thompsonville, Lithchfield, and Torrington billed by Tuesday night, or by Wed. morning at 9 o'clock.

"In reply will say our expenses are so heavy in Waterbury that I stayed out of the papers--these price 25 cents per line I could not stand, the town is billed heavy.

"This man (bill poster) William Terry is no good on earth and he does not go any farther than Torrington, and the big fellow George Cannon is no good he is to slow, the near iron gray was awful stiff this A.M. and my load is light. Now this man Terry is a Cigarette Willie & no good on earth--to DAM slow, I took his brush this A.M. and worked with Fitzgerald and showed him how to hang paper I sent Cannon on a country route he may never come back. I hope so.

"I cannot trust this team and paper with these men. They would kill things by hard driving and would all ride up hill I make em walk up the hills. I will be nine days ahead by Thursday night. I want two more good bill posters. I've hired these and I will get rid of them. I want men that will look after the horses, harness and oil the wagons--without telling the most helpless set I ever saw.

"Don't lose any sleep thinking the show will catch up with me. If I have paper and money to do business I will make the time. A few dollars sent to Torrington to me will be thankfully received. I have to give the boys a little & last night I had to pay my bill in advance the boys got in at Mrs. Quintan, Lou and Goodrich, Harry Thurston and wife, Pearl Foster, and the other young lady, stop at Mrs. Stones opposite the post office in Thomaston the best and cleanest place of them all & near the lot. In Big Brick Block up two flights, it's OK."

To A. G. Southey April 23, 1901 from Litchfield, Conn.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Litchfield, Conn.

"Note--Of all the hills I ever drove over Thomaston via Northfield to Litchfield and it rained like hell until we got 4 miles then snow and the wind blew a hurricane then a mile further then it changed to rain again we posted the town in the rain and I

will leave here in the morning at 6:30--Send a bill poster with double team in the morning to Morris--he will carry 150 sheets of paper to put up. Then the liveryman will take him to Torrington and when the bill poster gets there, Torrington will be billed.

"If good weather prevails you will do a good business here. But if such weather as we have now a 10 cent price is all you get. The ground is very wet and soft and roads bad.

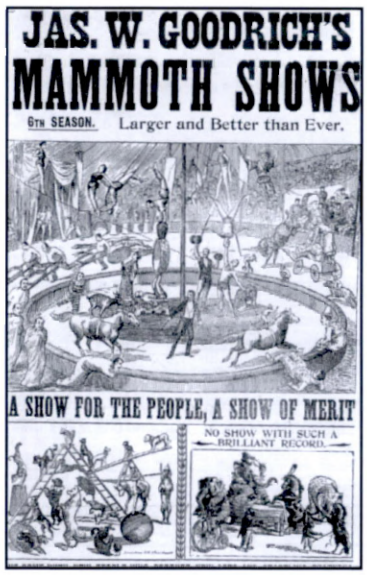
"You must positively not dig any ring on the diamond on this fair ground but west of the diamond, see lot contract. Dig a ring there level it down these are the conditions in which they rented me the grounds, so act accordingly. It has rained like hell all day and it is raining now this 9 o'clock p.m. No bakery in Litchfield see bread contract."

To A. G. Southey April 24, 1901 5:30 a.m.: "Will drop you a line regards high rate for hotel here--only one hotel, United States and the landlord would make no less rate, his rate is $2.50 per day. This is a summer resort and the boarding houses are not ready. The only thing I could do for advance brigade is $2.00 per day. I leave for Torrington at 6:30 am in one hour. You have started too early."

To A. G. Southey April 24, 1901 from Torrington, Conn.

"Enclosed please find contracts for Torrington. Note you will also find license for Thomaston which I overlooked in sending contracts from that place. You will also find Route #1 from Lithchfield we bill posted, I left to do country billing. When you leave Litchfield do not take the short route for Torrington you could never get through. Go from Litchfield to Litchfield Station then up to Torrington only two miles farther. Stagecoach and two other wagons stuck in the Big Mire two very bad places. We got through by the skin of our teeth all others stuck so take my advice as to route from Lithchfield to Thomaston."

To A. G. Southey May 1, 1901 from Westfield, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Chicopee Falls. Only one lot and that is the Berns lot half way between Chicopee & Chicopee Falls. The two towns are only 1 mile apart and two days would be a looser with the Ringlings and the Forepaugh-Sells with all the best boards and it only costs 5 cents to Holyoke and 5 cents to Springfield. I cant tell why you want to stop in Holyoke with no earthly chance to get up a sheet of paper and such a lot of stuff as came by express you show will never make a dollar with such billing. Mark what I tell you I am not with the bill posters.



Herald used by James Goodrich in 1900.

"You make your self conspicuous by your silence--what is the show doing--anything or nothing. It seems dam funny that I don't get a letter from some of you. Do you get any more new paper or do you think this old paper with a few pick ups will last all season, all I got to say--the show will never make a dollar unless good paper is put out.

"P.S. I received 2 telegrams and a postal card here."

To A. G. Southey May 1, 1901 at Chicopee Centre, Mass.: "Holyoke painted red with Ringling Bros. for May 18th, shall I make Holyoke or Easthampton after Westfield--send pickups to East-hampton--have only four days paper. Where is the new paper? Answer to Westfield, Mass."

To A.G. Southey May 2, 1901 from Holyoke, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Westfield, Mass. The lot is at the foot of Grand Street--also at the foot of Grand Street is a lot of ground to put up horse tents--cook tents and wagons--only 2 lots to be had one at $35.00 and the other at $25.00. This lot is one block from trolley line. The bill poster would not let me have a board a few dobs and lithographs in windows and the two newspapers.

"The lots are high and dam hard work to get it at that price--found papers in Express Office--will use it up in a very few days. Are we to have new paper soon or not at all I will use every sheet I have in six days."

To A. G. Southey May 3, 1901 from Northampton, Mass.:

"Enclosed please find contracts of Holyoke, Mass. Less the license contract. I waited 10 days for the license. The Alderman will meet next Tuesday May 7 and pass on the license question. I made the town, which is not a cheap one. You can see by the contracts the water power company of Holyoke own all the available land to show on and they will not deviate a cent. I begged, prayed & coaxed but no use. It was $35.00 take it or let it alone. You telegraphed me to make Holyoke and I made it. It cost a $100.00 to make it and it is up to you to give a good parade and a good show to leave a good name with the public."

To A. G. Southey May 4, 1901 from Northampton, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Northhampton, Mass. Note I could not get a meal for self and men or a place to sleep, all boarding houses full in East Hampton and no hotel only a students boarding house, so I did not make the town.

"List of paper put up and paid for by tickets--48 sheets. Country Route No. 1--75 sheets. Opera House boards--220 sheets. Total number of sheets in Northampton, Mass.--343."

To A. G. Southey May 6, 1901 from Belchertown, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Amherst, Mass. NOTE There came 2 bundles of lithographs from Erie, Pa, They weighed 130 pounds, I paid the freight $1.92. The lithos are not lined. It would not cost you anything more had you ordered them lined. I don't find any pick ups you have got the route by this time and you will know where to reach me with both money and paper. I shall catch on another good bill poster in a very few days.

"West Brookfield and Spencer will both be billed the same day. Southbridge and Webster will both be billed in one day. I shall don the

paste pail in order to get 10 days ahead, this town is billed & we leave here very early in the morning for Ware, Mass. and will reach Ware as Early as 9 o'clock A M., distance 10 miles.

"NOTE I have made all arrangements for the circus to Sunday in Amherst. Feed for 2 days a fine lot right in the heart of the town and as level as a floor. Get the entire show in Amherst before 7 AM Sunday morning the 12th. The lot is John Haley's and is on Lincoln Street in the rear of his house. The 30 pounds of bread also 5 gallons milk will be left at Mr. Haley's House Saturday night for Sunday.

"On Monday morning 30 pounds of bread and 5 gallons milk will be brought to you. The baker's a woman, won't deliver goods on Sunday. Get wood from Haley."

Second letter from Belchertown dated May 6, 1901.:

"Please find contracts for Belchertown, Mass.

"NOTE No places to post paper so I hired the 3 sides of a new building on Main Street. The building will hold 150 sheets of paper, 30 sheets long and 5 high. The Park View Hotel is the only hotel in town and no boarding houses. It comes high but we had to have it. Next town Ware, Mass. Distance 10 miles."

To A. G. Southey May 7, 1901 from Ware, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Ware, Mass.

"Note--Mr. George Carson the Bill Poster who "Blowed" at Northampton to join the Ringling car, and who lasted but one day with the "Gigantic," returned this evening with a note requesting we put him to work. I have done so but very much against my will, as a man who will play such a trick I have no confidence in--he is as dumb as an ox, and a dam poor bill poster. I am all through here and the wagons will leave here at 6 o'clock in the morning for Warren, Mass. Distance 6 miles. Warren and North Brookfield both will be billed tomorrow and Spencer will be billed Thursday, Charleston Friday and Southbridge and Webster on Saturday, that will make me 10 days ahead.

"You three proprietors of the circus must have a hell of a lot to do, you can't drop me a friendly line and let me know how the show is doing. You are like the Rhoda Royal they never wrote me. But put it in my neck for $42.00. I have 5 days paper in the wagon, do I get any more."

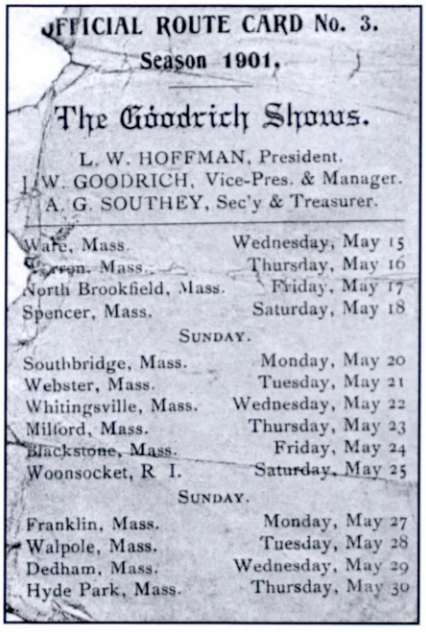
To A. G. Southey May 11, 1901 from Southbridge, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Southbridge. The distance from Spencer to this town is 15 miles. NOTE the first 7 miles is a very hilly road, the last 8 is good--watch the sign posts for Charleston then Southbridge. When you come to a fine country residence brick house with 4 big chimneys turn to the right then the first left."

To A. G. Southey May 11, 1901 from Northhampton, Mass.: "Horse came last night in bad shape, this morning can't walk left him, come to Southbridge first train

bring me a horse."

To A. G. Southey May 14, 1901 from Webster, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Southbridge, Mass. NOTE All arrangements have been made for company to Sunday in Southbridge. Feed will be on the ground Sunday morning. EXTRA. It was hell to get a lot in Webster. I hired one over in Dudly at $25.00 then they wanted $75.00 for the license. Don't pay the Davis order for lot in Dudly I would not give $75.00 license."

Route card issued by the Goodrich show in 1901.



OFFICIAL ROUTE CARD No. 3.
Season 1901.

The Goodrich Shows.

L. W. HOFFMAN, President.
J. W. GOODRICH, Vice-Pres. & Manager.
A. G. SOUTHEY, Sec'y & Treasurer.

Ware, Mass.	Wednesday, May 15
Warren, Mass.	Thursday, May 16
North Brookfield, Mass.	Friday, May 17
Spencer, Mass.	Saturday, May 18
SUNDAY.	
Southbridge, Mass.	Monday, May 20
Webster, Mass.	Tuesday, May 21
Whitingsville, Mass.	Wednesday, May 22
Milford, Mass.	Thursday, May 23
Blackstone, Mass.	Friday, May 24
Woonsocket, R. I.	Saturday, May 25
SUNDAY.	
Franklin, Mass.	Monday, May 27
Walpole, Mass.	Tuesday, May 28
Dedham, Mass.	Wednesday, May 29
Hyde Park, Mass.	Thursday, May 30

To A. G. Southey May 16 from Woonsocket, R. I.: "When at Webster you told me I could look for a post office order for money to pay the men and $15.00 for myself. I also told you to send some money for expenses as you know what I had left. In the my last statement You will find the statement at Spencer, Mass. How do you expect me to get 10 days a head when you make the delays yourself. I have made 2 days and have lost the same, by you not doing as stipulated. We work night and day from 5 o'clock in the morning gain time and it is either for the want of money to do business with or a delay in the paper. I came here last night and it is now 1 o'clock p.m. Thursday May 16 and the town not billed. It is hell to get a lot here unless you go 2 miles out – I am after the base ball grounds 3 minutes walk from the Main street in the heart of the city. I have 2 weeks dates here COD 21 dollars and $1.45 charges and a box of paper in the freight house I must have them before I leave so if no money comes to pay for the dates and the freight on paper, I shall stay here until I get it. The boys are asking for their first months pay. I told them when we get to Blackstone I would give it there, but I cannot.

"We don't play Blackstone but we play Whitiusville in the heart of the town the first circus that was ever there and the first billboard ever erected in the town. It is 98 feet long and 10 feet high and on the main street. $20,000 is paid to mill hands this Thursday and Friday we don't play Milford the Ringlings have every board in town and it's the closest to Worcester. Whitiusville, Wed. May 22, Woonsocket Thurs. and Fri. May 23 and 24."

Telegram to A. G. Southey May 16, 1901 at Southbridge, Mass.:

"See Westfall at Woonsocket at once. Make Millville for Monday as small pox in Southbridge, You use cars to make it."

Telegram to A. G. Southey May 16, 1901 from Woonsocket, Mass.:

"No money order at Blackstone as promised. Two weeks dates here twenty two dollars charge--box of paper by freight--telegraph sixty dollars through express company quick."

To James Goodrich May 16, 1901

from Millbury, Mass.:

"After telegraph to you I was billing town, I went to the printing office here to get dates, to put on the lithograph and to advertise in the paper that would come out tomorrow. I brought two bill posters with me and a can of paste, no place to post any paper. The Harper Brothers Show is here today and using the same paper we use, that is window lithos and they are lined with the Harper Brothers Head in the upper left, and every window in town is full of them. The printers here will not print the dates or give me the required amount of newspaper advertising unless he had the money in advance and I only have enough to pay our RR fares back to Woonsocket. Southey promised to send me money to Blackstone but he failed to keep his promise. I ordered two weeks dates from Calhouns commencing May 28 the dates come here COD $21.00 and $1.45 Express Charges. I went to the 2 little hotels to get the people in--none would take a person--the Selectman was out of town and the lot man was away and everything worked against me. No license to be had. The Harper Bros. are using exactly the same Erie Lithos you are using only they have their lithos made like special--this I wanted you to o but I suppose Hoffman and Southey says no. I have lost the day for want of money to get the dates. Southey said I would find paper at Whitiusville but none there. Why in thunder don't some of you drop me a line, Whitiusville never had a circus before and I have a billboard on the main street 98 feet long a 10 feet high and the show in the heart of the town. Now there is but one thing to do in Spencer that is to announce to the audience about the Southbridge smallpox scare and that you have to cancel the town and play Spencer Monday & then drive to Webster, distance 15 miles from Spencer. Say Jim the more I work to get ahead 10 days the more I am put back for want of money and paper to do business with. I made two days since I have been out--lost one at Torrington--waiting for dates. Now no money to pay COD on dates, I told Southey about this in Webster, well if the show catches up to me it will not be my fault. I have a box of paper here in the freight house besides the COD on dates the Price and Honeywell show which goes under the name of the Charles Lee Great London Shows, died at an early date It only lived 11 days according to Punch Irving's advertisement in the *Clipper* and he was manager of the side show.



Ticket used to pay for allowing a lithograph to be placed in a window.

"There is a chance now to buy a railroad show car and big wagons cheap. This man Honeywell is a big stiff, George Stowman the farmer made a bad railroad contractor. I gave them six weeks to last with them old farts with the show acting as the mama's of the trick."

To A. G. Southey May 19, 1901 from Milford, Mass.: "Enclosed please find contracts for Woonsocket, R.I.

"Note--No milk to be had no one would make contract for same so use condensed milk unless you should chance to run against a milk man who can supply you 5 gallons a day."

On May 20, 1901 Sam Westfall had a meeting with the owners of the Goodrich Shows and on that date he received $22.67 based on his contract and was paid in full for salary to date and clear of all other demands. He severed his employment with the owners of the mud show, and went on to other pursuits.

In January 1902 Sam wrote to Lew Hoffman and commented on his current situation. He was in advance of the Lucier's Novelty Comedy Company, which carried a superb military band, grand solo orchestra and new and gorgeous costumes. Sam took over from another agent a few months previous, and he was on a "swell show." He confided in Lew that he was attempting to take out a moral play called Old Farmer Hopkins. Plans were to book New York and New England in the summer of 1902 and then play straight through for the fall and winter of 1902 and 1903. Sam planned to stop in Bridgeport and see Lew in a couple of weeks.

A month later in February 1902 Sam again corresponded with Lew Hoffman since they did not have an opportunity to meet in January. Sam was held over in Danbury, Conn. since the Adams Express Company misplaced two bales of lithographs, and had to wait for them to arrive.

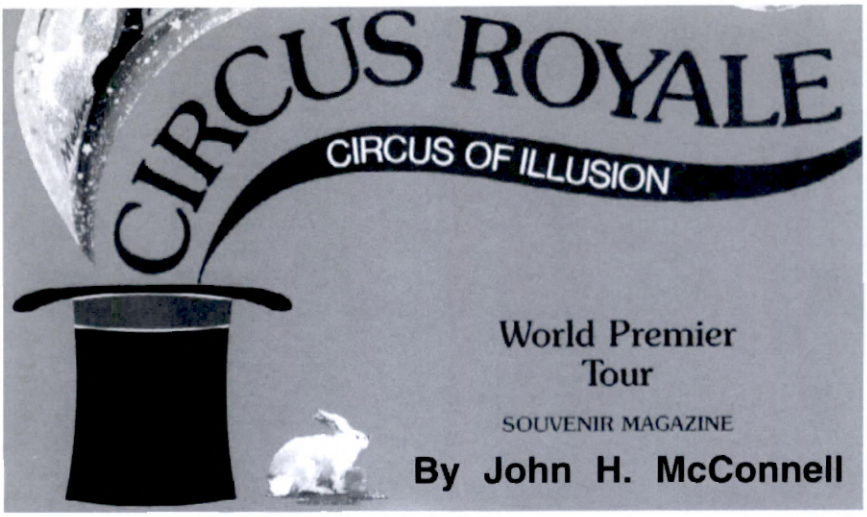
Al Southey had just held a meeting with Sam at the hotel in Danbury, and "he said Goodrich did not like me from the start." That was the major problem with the advance and Sam Westfall--a clash of personalities hurt the show from the beginning.

Sam's current employer the Lucier's Novelty Comedy Company had noticed an increase of $225.00 a week on the average with the way Sam was handling the advance. They had a great show, plenty of paper, all special, fine uniforms, and music.

Sam made an offer to Lew, if he wanted to go into the show business with a small investment of capital and a sure winner. Sam was promoting the rural play entitles Old Farmer Hopkins for which he paid a small weekly royalty. There were 9 people in the play and five people in the orchestra, 8 pieces of brass, 2 drums, 14 people in all.

The play had only been performed in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, and Sam was to book it through New England. The show still needed 4-drop curtains, a country farm, interior of a barn, farmhouse, and yard.

Sam informed Lew that the woods are full of men who are willing to invest in a sure thing, and he was going to make him an offer. Lew was to think it over, and Sam would pay his fare to and from Westfield, Mass. where he had planned to lay over for a day. If Lew agreed, they would meet and hopefully strike a deal. Lew never made the meeting as he was planning to take out a railroad show in 1902 and needed all his investments to put his own show on rails. This ended the connection between Sam Westfall, Al Southey, and Lew Hoffman with each going their own way for the 1902 season.



Author's Note: The following was the basis for a presentation made at the 2001 Circus Historical Society conference in Baraboo, Wisconsin. It indicates the flow of the presentation and its major points. The talk was made from this material along with photographs, tables and videos. It was not a "read" paper.

As a circus historian, I have often deplored the lack of accurate and complete records for a show. However, as a circus producer, I can be as guilty as most. In the process of producing and touring, little thought seems to be given to preserving materials for the future.

When I formed Circus Royale in 1986, an effort was made to preserve records from the show's framing and first tour. Those records were latter deposited in Circus World Museum's library. Although the records are accurate and fairly complete, they do not tell the whole story, so this presentation is meant to provide insight into how and why the show was conceived, produced and toured--at least a description of my perceptions.

Circus Royale's initially toured the United States and Canada as a combination circus and illusion theater show. It was a two year tour (1987 and 1988) and included some sixty engagements. Most were one day stands with a few two day engagements. The tour was both a critically and financially success, but it was also a learning experience.

The motivation for the show developed while I was general manger of the Big Apple Circus. One of my objectives with the Big Apple had been to increase its route. By 1986, that had been accomplished. The route was twenty-six weeks including Lincoln Center. New engagements had been added in Maine, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Vermont, Schenectady and West Point.

Elizabeth McCann was then the Executive Director of the New York School for Circus Arts--the parent of the Big Apple Circus. She and I both came from commercial backgrounds, she from Broadway theater and I from circus and magic shows. We identified what we believe to be an excellent opportunity for a quality circus. We wanted to capitalize on the success of the Big Apple by further expanding its route, adding a second unit and producing special events. However, our suggestions met with resistance. The realities were a maximum of 26 weeks, only one unit, no special events and no indoor shows.

Eventually, both Liz and I left the Big Apple: Liz to return to Broadway show production, and I to create a circus to meet the opportunities we had identified.

Assisting in my effort was John Starr, booking director with Kolmar/Luth. At the time Kolmar/Luth was a major New York based booking agency of theatrical productions for theaters. They handled shows such as Hal Holbrook's Mark Twain Tonight and touring Broadway musicals..

John perceived the same opportunities Liz and I had identified, and he felt that by branching into circus Kolmar/Luth could expand its business. (Actually, he had worked with me to create two Big Apple Circus engagements sponsored by theaters.) Together, we developed the original concept for Circus Royale.

It was to be a show presented in theaters with high quality acts and state-of-the-art theatrical technology. Also, to create a uniqueness and attempt to develop our own niche, we elected to integrate illusions and circus. Our thoughts were to have features such as:the ring master would open the performance on a bare stage and then proceed to by produce the entire cast of animal and human performers, the trapeze artist would be



The entire Circus Royal cast on stage. All illustrations are from the author.



Ringmaster David Hibling.

vanished in mid-air, the animal trainer would be transformed into a tiger, and, an elephant would be vanished.

We presented the idea at several booking conferences, and it was well received. Actually, the input from those conferences further assisted in the final formatting of both the show and its marketing. Kolmar/Luth became so enthusiastic and supportive of the idea that it pledged 40% of the required capital.

In late 1986, we began pre-production. John Starr concentrated on booking a tour, and I concentrated on building the performance. Scenery and props were ordered. Lighting and sound designed, and custom illusions created.

The first circus act hired was the Trampoline Guys and Debbie. It was a high energy act just completing a tour with the Big Apple Circus. Next, Katinka's (Nock) dog act was contracted. Her husband, Pio, agreed to be prop boss. Then, Debbie Chapman's Nyoka single trapeze act was added.

Terry Parsons and his wife, Danuta, were just returning from England where he had served as technical consultant to the musical, Barnum. They had an excellent combination of theater and circus experience. Danuta was to perform her aerial act, and Terry would do two clown numbers.

David Balding was framing his new show, Circus Flora. His elephant, also named Flora, was the correct size to vanish, so it was booked--both for an act and the vanish. Carla Zoppe was hired to work the act. (Flora played almost the entire tour, but for the second half was replaced by Alan Campbell with a similar size elephant.)

The very first act contracted was a magician--Shimada. He is an excellent illusionist with an outstanding parasol and dragon act. In the dragon act, he dons a Samurai mask and robe and fights a fire-breathing dragon. When he cuts off the dragon's head, he discovers himself inside the dragon costume and his wife wearing the Samurai mask and robe.

For a second magic act, we offered Ron and Joy Holiday a contract.

Interestingly, they turned down the two year tour. Why? Because they insisted on being announced as "Special Guest Artists." That implied they were stars of the show, and we wanted a show with out a star act. They would not agree to eliminating their announcement. They seemed to us more focused on their single act than the concept of an entire show. (More on this type of thinking later.)

We contracted Mike Phillips and Tricia, also magicians, who I had worked with on the Hanneford circus. They were to furnish three magic numbers--including one with a leopard.

Our final artist contracted was David Hibbling, an excellent traditional ringmaster from England who had also worked with me on the Hanneford Circus. David was to present the show owned illusions as well as announce and sing.

The show was scheduled to go into rehearsal the fall of 1987, but about a month before rehearsals, Kolmar/Luth announced that due to losses they had experienced on other shows, they would be unable to provide the promised investment. We were still able to put the show together, but several of our ideas had to be restructured or canceled.

The show opened in West Point's Eisenhower Theater to a full house of 4000 people--and then went on to play its full two year tour.

We quickly discovered there were significant differences in the approaches of circus performers theater professionals. Here is breakdown of our personnel's backgrounds:

Circus
75% Acts
25% Technical
25% Designers
50% Marketers

Theater
25% Acts
75% Technical
75% Designers
50% Marketers

The first differences we encountered were during rehearsals. We had scheduled a full week of rehearsals. Each act was rehearsed three times by itself: once for cues, timing and props; once for music and sound; once for lighting. The entire show also rehearsed three times: sequencing, timing and prop moves; music; lighting and sound cues. There was also a dress rehearsal.

From our theater professionals' points of view, it was a short rehearsal schedule. However, many of our circus performers complained it was too long. I recall one saying, "Look, the first performance is all the rehearsal we need."

We also ran into some jargon problems. Typical was an incident that occurred during a set up. One of our circus people, standing on the stage, called "Bring it in."

Debbie Chapman as aerialist Nyoka.



He was referring to a prop he wanted brought onto stage. However, "bring it in" meant to the stage carpenters, "lower one of the fly pipes." So they did. The heavy pipe just missed hitting the circus person.

I had always felt circus performers were not treated with the same type of respect as other artists received, so we decided on this show they would receive:

Free parking and utilities every day of the tour whether we were working that day or not.

A green room at every engagement stocked with refreshments.

Coffee and rolls at every morning set-up.

A full week's pay each week regardless of the number of days worked in the week.

A washer and dryer at every facility.

Individual dressing rooms with showers whenever possible.

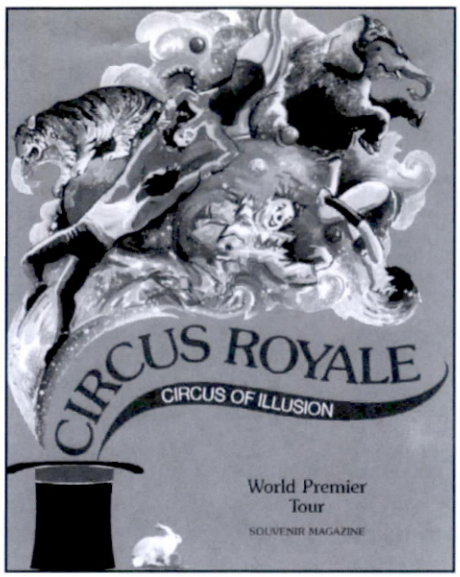
Shoes and tights for the female performers.

A full hot meal on any day with two or more performances.

A full time company manger to deal with any problems the performers experienced.

Loaders and unloaders for their equipment, props and costumes.

Unfortunately, this type of treatment made little difference. We experienced the same type of problems and complaints as were experienced on shows that offered considerable less benefits.



Cover of the Circus Royale program.

The most significant problems were:

Circus personnel seemed to put their acts first and the show second, while theater people put the show first. For example, on several occasions, when a circus performers felt there was someone in the audience who might someday provide them work, they added tricks to their acts and ignored their regular routine and the show's structure. Theater people never did this.

Some of our circus performers were constantly walking into the audience and lobby in costume or robes. The theater people never did this.

Our theater people stayed in character whenever the audience could see them, but often our the circus performers would get out of character as soon as they took their bow, even if still on the stage.

On the other hand, whenever there were problems such as late arrivals, difficult load outs and equipment breakdowns, our circus people all jumped in and assisted in any way they could. Our theater people tended to stay with their individual assignments.

Probably the most disappointing actions concerned the honoring of contracts. On three occasions, circus acts just did not show up at an engagement they did not want to make.

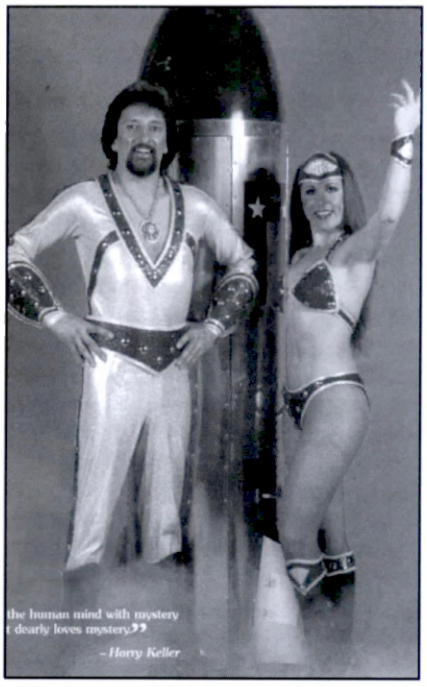
Other difference had to do with the type of venue we had selected--theaters versus more typical circus arenas. Generally:

Arenas:
Average 4000 seats
Do 1 show each day
Have ample parking
Provide enough seats for comps and discounts
Allow food, novelties and rides.

Theaters:
Average 1500 seats
Do 2-3 shows each day
Have limited parking
Have limited comps and discounts ability
Allow only novelties and programs

From the public's point of view:
Circus Meant:
Family Oriented Performance
4 People in a Party
$5-$8 Ticket Price
Early Show Times
Child Price Tickets
All Concessions and Rides But, Theater Was:
Adult Oriented Performances
2 People in a Party
$15-$25 Ticket Price
Late Show Times

Mike and Tricia Phillips.



Clown Terry Parsons.





The Trampoline Guys.

One Price Ticket

Novelties and Programs

Although we had planned on a theater only tour, we decided to experiment with a one ring arena presentation in California. We did and were thoroughly pleased with the results. The show went smoother marketing was easier and the public seemed pleased.

At the time, we conducted a series of market research surveys both with people attending the circus and people not attending the circus. Based on the results of those studies and our experience the conditions we felt governed the success of any new circus.

The circus was losing appeal.

There was a declining family circus tradition.

There was an increasing negative reaction to animal acts.

Shrine circuses were declining in both number and length.

There were fewer circus sponsors.

The public desired professional entertainment and positive customer relations.

Only Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey had national franchise--brand recognition.

In individual locations other circuses have a franchise such as Big Apple in New York and Boston, Shrine Circus in St. Paul and Ronald McDonald Circus in Nashville.

So, for its next tour, we established a somewhat revised format for Circus Royale. It was to be: One Ring. Play primarily arenas with some theaters. Quality vs quality acts. Limited animals. Strong clowns. Quality theatrical technology.

Unfortunately, the show did not go out in 1988. Kolmar/Luth was sold, and although John Starr at his new company wanted to re-book the show there was just not enough time. In addition John's strength was with theaters, and we wanted to concentrate on arenas.

However, the final reason for not touring was an offer to tour a musical from England--*London Follies.* We had developed an excellent technical crew, creative staff and touring equipment--perfect for such a national tour. We accepted the offer and produced and toured the show for several years. Afterwards I worked with the Hanneford Circus, but never gave up on the idea of doing Circus Royale as we wished.

In 1988, after leaving the Hanneford Circus, I was offered the 1998 Detroit Shrine Circus to produce. I accepted the offer and had Jimmy Hamid, Sr. to provide the equipment and floor management for the engagement. (That was where we redid the Wallenda seven person pyramid to great press coverage,)

The next few years, we began to recreate a Circus Royale route. This year we are playing both spring and fall routes and have finally been able to test our concept for a one ring arena show. For 2002, our routes will be expanded and all but two engagements will be one ring.

The McConnell produced Detroit Shrine Circus.



My hope is that Circus Royale will continue to fulfill its subtitle: Circus Royale, We put magic into the circus.

The Circus Royale program:

A musical introduction to world class circus stars. And internationally famous magicians. The CIRCUS ROYALE BAND.

Great Britain's leading ringmaster and illusionist. Magically produces the circus and its performers before your very eyes. DAVID HIBLING.

An energetic and exciting exhibition by champion trampoline performers from Canada, THE TRAMPOLINE GUYS.

Side splitting satire by America's foremost funster. TERRY "SPIKE" PARSONS.

The impossible made possible by America's MIKE PHILLIPS AND TRICIA.

Our beautiful jungle maiden demonstrates artistry in the air. NYOKA.

A rare combination of animal training and magical dexterity KATINKA.

She's here, she's there, she's everywhere. Climaxed by a racing motorcycle visibly passing through her body MIKE PHILLIPS AND TRICIA.

Intermission

A rare combination of agile acrobats and capering clowns THE GOOF-OFFS.

Performing at the very dome of the auditorium on a revolving metallic web DANUTA, AERIAL SPIDER LADY.

The most incredible elephant in the world culminating in an unequaled vanish FLORA.

She arrives from no where and departs in feline form MIKE PHILLIPS AND TRICIA.

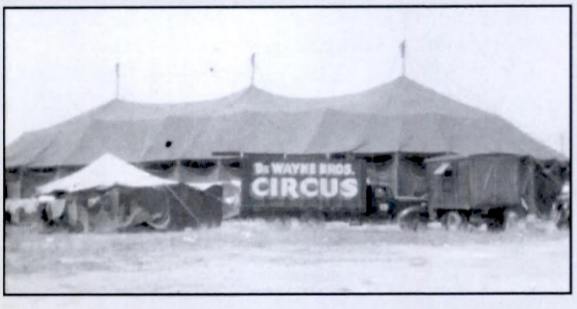
This time poking fun at our love affair with the automobile TERRY "SPIKE" Parsons.

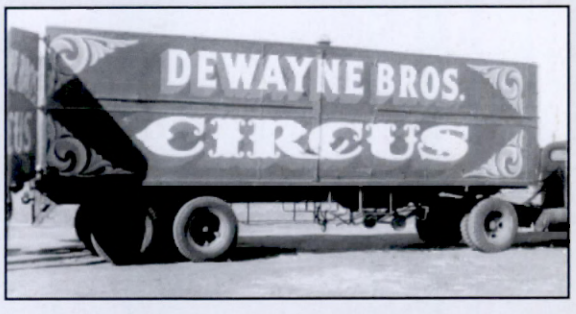
An oriental fantasy of parasols, silks and a death defying dragon SHIMADA.

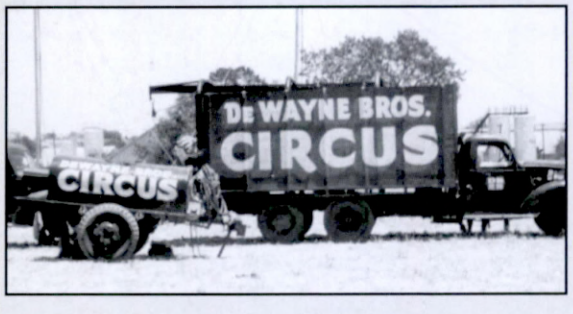
DeWayne Bros. CIRCUS

Ted DeWayne toured a medium sized truck circus in California from 1946 to 1972. These photos by Harry Quillen and Steve Hlavenka were taken in 1947.















Frank A. Robbins a most successful failure

PART FOURTEEN

By Robert Sabia

1911--Pretend

The 1911 route book closed with a poem, entitled "A SEASON SYNOPSIS" by Winona Robbins Anders.

"O, the joy of sunny springtime!
after winter cold and dreary;
Once again the band is playing,
Tell Jersey crowds, 'We're here!'

"Pennsylvania's population
Next is flocking out to see
What's creating that sensation,
There's a circus going to be!

"Then Ohio has her turn, too,
By the Erie tents are set,
Swim and fish in idle hours,
They are busy ones, you bet.

"In Michigan, it was the finest,
Cool and fresh the breeze up there,
While down home in eastern cities
People stifled in close air.

"Then the show in Indiana
Raised its tents 'neath summer sun;
The boys all like old Indiana,,
and it is the home of some.

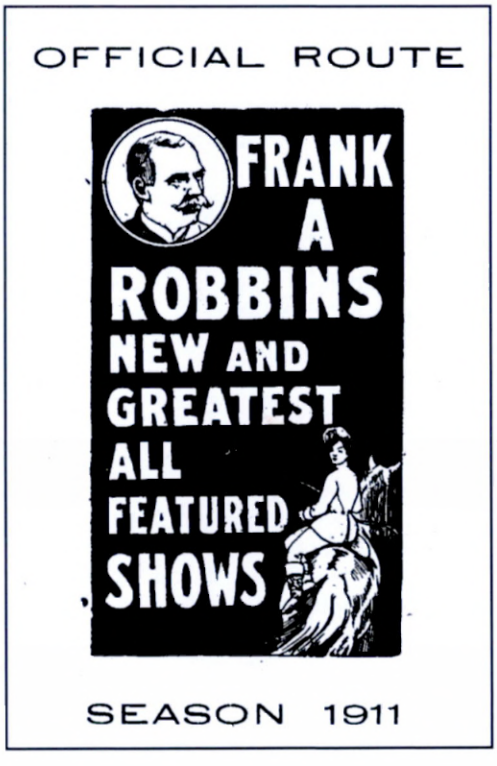
"Maryland, Delaware and Virginia,
Snack stands, oysters and fresh fish
Always seem to go together,
And the crowds complete our wish.

"Spring and summer now are over,
Keen air 'minds us of the fall,
Good season's work our satisfaction,
"'Home, Sweet Home,' the best of all."

That is how daughter Winona wanted all to remember the season just completed. Were it only so. It is very easy to "Pretend."

Have you ever dressed up for a party and then not be invited? That is how Frank A. may have felt when laying out his plans for the oncoming 1911 season. His show was ready to go--but where? New York and New England were still out of bounds and would remain so until he came to grips with the alimony issue. Given the extended tour of Pennsylvania during the 1910 season, he would be foolish to go back to many of these same towns the following year notwithstanding the wonderful after notices his show received throughout. He could not revisit Delmava so soon after the fall tour. It is obvious he created a circumstance whereby he had only a single alternative, and that was heading into the Midwest, a territory generally unfamiliar to him. To be sure, he toured extensively in Michigan in 1888 and not too successfully at that. Since then there was a hurried traverse through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa in both directions in 1889 where he almost lost his show in doing so. There were a few trial dates in Ohio in 1910 and his circus was well received. But Frank A. was an East Coast circus and that was that. He knew the towns, and understood the culture and the all-important economy. Generally, he could make money there and he was markedly less successful elsewhere. Yet it was to Michigan that he was bound in 1911. Unfortunately for him, there were more than a few other circuses with a similar destination. However, be-fore we leave the reader with the wrong impression about competition in the East, there was plenty there as well. It would seem that three shows of like size were joined at the hip in their respective early season tours of New Jersey: they being Downie & Wheeler, California Frank and the illustrious Frank A Robbins. During the late season this circumstance would be repeated, the only difference being California Frank being replaced by Pawnee Lillie. 1911 was arguably the greatest year of circuses traveling by rail in our history and it showed with day-by-day competition throughout the long season. But competition was what the circus business was all

The cover of the 1911 Frank A. Robbins Circus route book. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.



about and as Harry Truman frequently said, "If you can't stand the heat, then get out of the kitchen." Frank A. choose to remain in the kitchen.

In the *Billboard* (December 12, 1910), Robbins placed his first ad for help on the 1911 season which was to commence April 25th. The ad indicated the show was owned by the Bergen Amusement Co. It was seeking "FIRST-CLASS AND WELL-DRESSED ACTS of every kind and nature for circus, side show and concert; Chorus Girls and Ballet Dancers; Bosses for all departments; Man to run cook tent; MANAGER FOR SIDE SHOW AND CONCERT; General Superintendent; and People for Advance. Privilege Car and Candy Stands for rent." All the folks interested in the advance were to contact John Henry Rice who once again, was designated the General Agent, and all others were to address Frank A. himself. Both were at the Jersey City location. As it evolved, the staff was populated with some of the same individuals who were long-standing members of the Robbins' team. Besides Messrs. Robbins and Rice, they included Clarence Farrel, treasurer (repeater); D.P. White, special agent; Charles Chapman, mgr. of the advertising car, (repeater); his wife, contracting press agent; Dr. Gordon, press agent back with the show; Earl Conners, excursion agent; J. E. Ogden, mgr. of the side show; S. Wireback, superintendent of privileges; Carmendia Nasselli, musical director (repeater); Doc Parkhurst, supt. of canvas, Charles Quintard, boss hostler; Jack Nead, supt. commissary dept.; W. C. Cox, supt. of lights; George Steinhart, trainmaster; Ray Anders, supt of the working crew; Ed Booth, twenty-four hour man; and Mark Monroe, supt of animals including elephants. A keen eye will have noted that Ray Anders is none other than the husband of daughter Winnie. A quick climb up the hierarchical pole for apparently satisfactory services rendered, of whatever nature. Also worthy of note, Mattie Robbins, daughter Winnie and son Milton are not mentioned on the staff at this time. This may be a result of having successfully completed three straight years of relatively good business so their services were no longer thought to be required. They did travel with the show however.

STAFF.

Frank A. Robbins	General Manager
Clarence Farrell	Treasurer
H. I. Ellis	General Contractor
Gus Schwab	Legal Adjuster
J. E. Gordon	Press Agent
J. E. Ogden	Manager of Side Shows
Sam. Wireback	Manager of Privileges
Chas. A. Chapman	Manager of Adv. Car No. 1
D. P. White	Manager of Adv. Car No. 2
Mrs. C. A. Chapman	Contracting Press Agent
Joseph H. Hughes.	Special Agent

SUPERINTENDENTS.

Ray W. Anders	General Superintendent
Frank Anders	Superintendent Commissary
Tom Barton	Supt. Ticket Sellers
Charles Lowry	Supt. Ticket Takers
Geo. Steinart	Supt. Transportation
Fred. Markle	Supt. Sleeping Cars
Mark Monroe,	Supt. Menagerie
Steve Roberts	Supt. Canvas
Chas. Quintard	Supt. Stock
W. C. Cox	Supt. Lights
Edw. Flint	Supt. Props
J. R. Martin	Supt. Elephants
Whitey Wilson	Supt. Ponies
Wm. H. Brown	Supt. Ring Stock

A page from the 1911 Robbins route book listing the staff.

The show was rapidly being prepared for the coming season. In late January, J. Henry Rice told the *Clipper* that the winter work was practically completed. He alleged that several new cars would be added and the menagerie would be enlarged. Several weeks later it was reported in the *Billboard* that the show would be adding three more cars and five new cages which were being built in the winter quarters. While it is possible that three rail cars were added, they merely replaced those already on the show. It will be recalled that during the 1910 season, Frank A. experienced several train mishaps wherein both flats and cages were damaged. Likely the railroad cars and the five cages were replacement units for those too damaged to be repaired. Of course it may be that by tightening up the loading order, sufficient space became available so that another cage could be added. More than that is unlikely on a fifteen car train. It is believed that the train consist for 1911 remained the same as it was for 1910, viz.; 1 advance, 3 stocks, 7 flats and 4 coaches totaling 15.

From February 1911 until the opening in late April, Frank A. apparently was actively pursuing his alter-ego career as a broker in circus property. He was also finalizing his early routing in an arena that was populated with the strongest opposition he had ever experienced. On February 11th, Joseph D. Carroll of Fiss, Doerr and Carroll Horse Co. sent Robbins a letter which read in pertinent part: "We just received a wire from Mr. Muller in Cincinnati stating that they would meet our man on Sunday. Peterson is in Buffalo but I am going to get him on the phone. If we make a deal I will get into communication with you immediately and you can meet Pete where the show is. PS you can have anything you want." It appears that Fiss et al was interested in show property, possibly from one that was defunct and in the hands of the receiver (Donaldson?)

Frank A. may have been working as a middleman to secure the property for Fiss et al. In consideration for successful services rendered, he would be permitted to select circus property as payment in kind. It is not known whether Mr. Robbins actually was successful in this initiative. On February 20th J. Augustus Jones penned a letter to Frank A. which indicated that Robbins was active in trading equipment. It reads, "Your letter at hand and contents noted. No doubt but what you could make a trade with John Welsh (long time owner of small railroad circuses--took out Welsh Bros. on 9 cars in 1911 for this tough (?) car. It has not been shipped yet. I am sorry that you must have opposition with Downie & Wheeler. They better be careful. It is hard enough to get money without having opposition. I leave today for Chicago. Will be gone a week or so. My two car show opens Feb. 25th near San Antonio, Texas. Am framing up a two or three car outfit here (Warren, Pennsylvania). Have engaged a manager for it. I will not be with it. Your Friend J. Augustus Jones." Once again, we do not know if Frank A. worked out an agreement with John Welsh.

But the comments Mr. Jones made regarding competition were right on point. As we shall see, in addition to big show competition, throughout the early and latter part of the season, intense small show competition was experienced from the likes of Downie & Wheeler on ten cars and California Frank on eleven cars. The potential conflict of dates must have been known by March because on April 6th, Frank A. wrote the following letter to Al Wheeler, part owner of Downie & Wheeler. It reads "Friend Wheeler: Yours received. I showed all of Jersey for 25 cents the past two years without opposition and I do not believe it will pay to change it. The Forepaw (sic) Sells has a contract with the Reading to be delivered to the C.R.R. of N.J. at So. Bethlehem and they have a contract with the P.R.R. to be received from the C.R.R. of N.J. at Oak Island Jct. The California Frank Wild (West) takes all of the towns on the D. L. & W. ahead of both of us. I have canceled my contract with the Cumberland Valley and cut out towns that I never got as little as $1,000.00 in as I run on to the Forepaw Show. Also cut out Norristown and will cut out any town that any show takes that is stronger than we are unless some place where I am wedged and cannot help myself. New Jersey towns will have to change from what they have ever been before, if we get expenses in any three of them. I am always willing to do anything fair, but you can readily see that I must show Camden, New Brunswick, Plainfield, Easton and Perth Amboy for 25 cents, and the state is too small to charge one price one place and a different (one) at some other. If I did it, the opposition show would let it be known and it would hurt. At Perth Amboy the license is $100. per day for shows charging more than 25 cents and $50. for shows charging 25 cents or less." This letter and others written by and to Frank A. reveal a surprising openness regarding the concerns of the day. To the extent that this writer can determine, the foregoing letter is true in all regards and contains no misleading statements. The towns mentioned were in fact played at the admission price set forth (Philipsburg, New Jersey is across the river from Easton, Pennsylvania and is considered by Robbins to be the Easton date mentioned). The grosses set forth in this letter and others to follow appear to be accurate. Gross seemed to be the way circus men described a particular locale e.g. a $900 town or a $1200 town. It was all the description necessary. Very seldom did the local governing body or police force merit any mention, one way or the other. Obviously competition could convert a $1500 town into a $800 town. Gross said it all.



The Robbins biplane litho. Ken Harck collection.

The *Billboard* of February 25th advised that "(n)ew canvas has been received for both the big and side shows, menagerie, dressing top and office tents. The new side show front will be something entirely out of the ordinary, an original idea of Mr. Robbins. All the wagons have been thoroughly overhauled and many rebuilt. The menagerie will be enlarged by several new cages in addition to the three new open dens to replace the ones that were demolished last season by a railroad accident. The additional cages will require one more middle piece in the menagerie top, making it a four pole top." To this, the *Clipper* added in its February 25th issue ". . . The aquarium will be a special feature this season, and the new exhibits which have arrived at quarters have aroused as much curiosity and enthusiasm in the old 'trouper' as it will in the traditional 'small boy and little sister.' Prof. DeMilo, the 'man bird' and his biplane, have arrived at quarters and this addition to the aviation department will make it the largest ever attempted by a traveling organization. Prof. DeMilo, who is one of the most successful aviators of the present day, will make daily ascensions, and encircle the lot as a special attraction. Some of the new baggage stock recently purchased has arrived at quarters, and the six new Shetland ponies, which arrived last week, have been taken in hand by Whitie Wilson, who says they are the 'swellest six' have ever pulled the lines over." Once again, Frank A. seemed to get carried away with his press releases as there was never any mention by the local press of an aviator being on the show nor was the aquarium ever addressed. A herald for 1911 depicts a litho that shows a biplane in flight but does not describe the act nor does it identify the aviator. Aviation being as special as it was during these early years, one would think that the local press would have made mention of the plane buzzing about on circus day, but it never did.

In a want ad placed in the March 18 *Billboard* Frank A. was offering a 60 foot stock or elephant car, equal to new, for sale. No price was listed. Why this car was being offered for sale is not known, particularly one in such good condition. It may have been a trade item and could be the "tough" car mentioned in J. Augustus Jones' letter of February 20th. "tough" may have another word for "stock or elephant" car.

With the onset of the season, Robbins announced the performance program. On opening day the *Clipper* reported it as follows: "(1) A very capable of clowning by John B Gleason, who performed in rube make-up, preceded the parade. He escorted, or tried to escort, many of

the audience to their seats in a very amusing manner. It was a funny bit of work and was heartily enjoyed by everybody. (2) The grand march around the tent, led by Jack Cousins (equestrian director), was one of much splendor and beautiful costumes. All participants were robed in bright colors, the men in yellow tights, red coats and hats, and expensive plumes, while the ladies wore costumes that were envied by many of the female audience. Slivers Oks then sang *Bye, Bye, Dearie* to several encores. The clowns, who are headed by this capable fun-maker, include: W. Lambertson, Charles LaBell, Gus Beruts and Charles Diamond, kept the audience in good humor throughout the whole performance with their funny antics and stunts, many of which are brand new. (3) Showed Charles Diamond in an aerial set that is above par. He does nearly everything seen in this style of act, with several new tricks to finish, and was a big success. He was handsomely attired in white tights. Over on the left side of the tent, Billie Leon, in sailor costume attracted considerable attention with his swinging rope performance. He was roundly applauded for his excellent work. (4) Taken up by Mrs. Hocum, in a beautiful riding ace, which called forth much applause. (5) Given over to the clowns, who again brought forth many new stunts, to numerous to mention. (6) Millie Jeanette, a versatile young lady, showed some excellent juggling. She was also seen on the revolving globe, and finished her performance with a serpentine dance which brought forth rounds of applause. (7) Jack Cousins, on a beautiful black stallion, in a menage act, brought him storms of approval. The horse does many fancy steps in a most capable manner, and at the finish does a cakewalk with the assistance of the band. (8) The clowns again held forth in an amusing prize-fight, with Slivers Oks as the leading funmaker. It was a clever piece of work and got many laughs. (9) The three Herberts in an acrobatic act that would be hard to beat. They were beautifully attired in white suits and performed some remarkable tricks with good results. (10) Fred Gerhardt, with his sextette of beautiful black stallions, won the admiration of everybody present with his fine performance. It was one of the features of the show. (11) The Leons, a man and a wee tot of a miss, in handsome red tights, perform some wonderful tricks on the trapeze. They got a good share of the applause. (12) A ballet, led by La Belle Dazie, assisted by eight handsome young ladies in beautiful green and yellow costumes. (13) The four Hocums, one man and three ladies, in a very excellent wire act, pleased the large audience. Some very good tricks are performed by this quartet, which earned them plenty of applause. (14) Again the clowns, in more amusing stunts, still better and a sure cure for all trouble. (15) Millie Jeanette, in white tights, juggled herself into favor (I wonder what this would mean today?). Charles Diamond, hand balancer was well liked, and little Geneva Leon, in the Spanish rings, was encored many times for her thrilling performance. This little miss gave a performance that would do credit to many old timers. The was one of the hits of the show. (16) The Two Herberts in Chinaman make-up with their trick horse, and they scored heavily. (17) James Burns, in a wire act that is second to none, was heavily featured. He does nearly everything on the wire, including dancing, laying down, jumping in a barrel, and at the finish walks with a pair of stilts. He scored a great success. (18) A carriage act performed by the Three Hocums, one man and two ladies, in handsome costumes. It is a very clever act, all three performers doing excellent work, which netted them much applause. (19) Another victory for the funmakers. Only two take part in an amusing mule trade, in which both get the worst of the bargain. It had the audience in an uproar and was a fitting climax to a most excellent performance. Professor Carmelia Naselli lead the band of about 15 pieces. They were outfitted in bright red uniforms." During the season, the performance remained relatively intact. Notable changes included the substitution of Edwin La Bell for clown Slivers Oks, the important addition of the remarkable Hillary Long and his head walking and balancing presentation, and the addition of the Famous Glendale Troupe, trapeze artists supreme.



This photo of the 1911 Robbins advance car appeared in the *Billboard*.

The *Clipper* mentioned that the big top was a 110 with two 40 foot middles. The side show top was described as a 85 foot with two 30 foot middles. However, a concurrent headliner article in the *Billboard* sets forth significantly different information regarding tent sizing. It claimed that the big top was a 120 foot with two 40s and one 50 foot middles. It was claimed to be new and manufactured by Knuckle Tent and Awning Company of New York. The article also stated that the dining tent was 48 x 96 ft and contained sixteen tables seating twelve each for a total capacity at any given time of about 180 employees. Chef Osa Lofland was once again in charge of the dining activities. Both articles claimed that the show was on sixteen cars which is one more than other sources indicate. It is believed the big top had four center poles so, if accurate, the *Billboard* article is probably closer to the truth.

The parade was described as excellent. It was "led by J. E. Gordon and Pete Cavanaugh immediately followed by the well-disciplined band of Carmelia Naselli divided in three different sections, numerous tableaux and the menagerie cages enlivened by twenty glittering horsemen on equines brilliantly enhanced with harmonious trappings. The music that kept the parade in step was enough to quicken the pulse, but the clowns with their innocent antics made the blood surge with excitement and desire to witness the performance itself. The menagerie has an admirably clean and wholesome appearance containing contributions from the stock of the William Bartels, Louis Ruhe and Hope animal companies. One big familiar object was missing, however, in Queen, the huge pachyderm, which required such a tremendous dose of potassium cyanide to bring about its end at the close of last season. A young elephant (Babe?) about twelve years of age bows gracefully and stalks triumphantly in the place of the former mammoth companion. However, it is to receive a partner on Monday as soon as the Steamer Lincoln can unload its cargo at the docks in New York City. The new elephant supplied by the firm of Louis Ruhe, is of Indian birth and stands about four feet, six inches in height. Carefully groomed ponies appeared in the parade at various intervals and added that the petiteness and charm that their presence possesses. Quite a variety of goats and deer occupied cages as well as a lion and lioness, nilgau, llama, kangaroos, leopards, bears, camels and a whole family of diminutive monkeys that disported most playfully in their iron barred enclosure."



LaBelle Calipha, Oriental dancer in the side show.

Doc Ogden was the superintendent of the side show. Inside H. Nugent handled both introductions and Punch and Judy, Marguerite (Margaret Still) had snakes, Marie DeVere was busy with sword swallowing, fire-eating, palm reading and trickery, Madam Sorena was the futurist, and Oriental dancing by LaBelle Asia and Calipha was enhanced by Turkish music played by Ali Hussar and his group. The side show performance was complemented by a colored band under the direction of W. S. Jacobs. It had seven members in addition to Mr. Jacobs. The band also presented a Georgia Minstrel to the delight of the audience.

A strong concert included J. J. Kelley, the dancing marvel; Miss Hilda Foster with Spanish dances; Professor Horace Davenport, celebrated violinist; the Kesters, comedy sketch; John Gleason presenting "The Man from Alabama;" Bemis & Bemis singing and talking comedy; James Roome, monologue; Jesse Toliver, roller skates; Jack Nead with songs and stories; and finally, Gleason & Roome, sidewalk conversationalists.

All in all, Frank A. Robbins came to a town bringing plenty of entertainment. Before leaving the performers, it might be of interest to note that the Hocum Family of Four were on call to perform a Principal Act by Mrs. Hocum, a Wire Act by the entire family, a Buggy Act and a Carrying Act. As set forth above, only the Principal, Wire and Carrying Acts were actually performed. For their work, the family was paid a sum of $90 per week plus room and board, such as it was. Skilled performers such as the Hocums' justifiably commanded a living wage on circuses. Although the Hocums were not true headliners, the range of pay for such services ranged from $75 to $125 per week. It is suspected that Fred Gerhardt, who was a headliner and featured in the billing, probably garnered a weekly recognition of $150 or more. On the other hand, clowns were generally at the other end of the pay scale with a paycheck between $10 and $15 being normal. Of course, as may be expected, performers salaries tended to maintain the same range throughout the industry. With the larger shows, featured performers could and did command considerably more. For instance, the Webb seal act was paid $250 per week while on the Forepaugh-Sells Circus in 1910 and 1911. The Kent seal act was paid only half that amount ($125) while on Gollmar in 1912. The essence of this brief looksee into salaries is that skilled performers could make a good salary while performing on the circus during the early 1900's. It is understood that this income could only be expected for approximately 26 weeks out of the year. However, vaudeville and other forms of stage entertainment offered work opportunities for many performers during the off-circus months. In addition, indoor circuses also provided another avenue to supplement the yearly income. If the performer was prudent and evolved his or her repertoire to account for the physical aging process, a 30 or more year career could be expected, followed by a well earned retirement period in reasonable comfort. All things considered, not a bad life style. For the worker bees, no such promise was made or delivered. General laborers really worked for their keep and perhaps some tobacco money, perhaps $3 per week plus room and board.

Bosses did somewhat better with the boss canvasman and trainmaster being in the $100 per month range on a medium size railer. A big railer would obviously pay more and the smaller shows tended to pay considerably less. Even general agents and office types never got rich, at least when the owner was watching. $75 per week was the most that such folks could aspire and many positions paid only about half that amount. The message here is clear. If you wanted to get rich, do something

else. If you wanted to do better than the norm, become a skilled performer. If you prefer to manage the advance or the like, don't expect big things in life, but you will do ok. If you wanted just to go along with the tide, expect no more than tobacco money. And lastly, if you wanted to have a roller coaster existence, ultimately being broke at the end, become an owner. For confirmation of this latter axiom, ask Frank A. Robbins.

Lest one gets the impression that it was all work and no play, such was not the case during this particular spring. In a display of recently found affluence, Mr. Robbins purchased a new 1911 Maxwell for his wife, Mattie. This was a fairly expensive car of the times and his Mattie expressed the intent to use it frequently during the season's tour riding about the countryside. Apparently the car was loaded on the train. Even before the season started, Mattie was visited by her sister, Mrs. V. E. Wilham of Madison, Wisconsin, and the two sisters spent considerable time motoring about northern New Jersey in the new handsome Maxwell.

In contrast to other years, the only excitement during the opening stands in Jersey City (Greenville, Marion and North Hoboken) was the arrest of two locals who were caught by the police trying to peep into the women's dressing tent. Their claims that they were only checking the integrity of the stake line was not well received by the local gendarmes. Business at the three locations was very good. There was an accident during loading that delayed the departure for Elizabeth by some hours. But as the run to Elizabeth was only 15 miles and on a Sunday to boot, no performance delay was experienced. A good start for the traveling season was made with fine business in excellent weather to an appreciative audience. An even shorter run of 12 miles took the troupe to Perth Amboy (5/2). Hillary Long, the head walker, was identified in the advance press releases. He must have just joined the show as he wasn't included in the Jersey City programs. In any event, he was the hit of the performance, gathering the highest praises from the locals and the press before a huge, turnaway night crowd. The afternoon business was characterized as fair. In the morning, a runaway four horse team pulling a baggage wagon caused an injury to the driver as it crashed into a telegraph pole, knocking him to the ground. He rejoined the show after receiving medical attention at the local hospital.



James Burns, wire walker in the big show.

Nearby New Brunswick was the next stop (5/3). Here Robbins followed the 101 Ranch aggregation by five days. The 101 Ranch aggressively advertised as did all large shows of that era. It paraded and gave a free exhibition on the showground in the a.m.. The side show opened at 11:15 a.m. It drew well in this college town, in fact better than Frank A. did in chilly weather. The first real jump of the season took the show to Lambertville, New Jersey. There the performance was greatly appreciated. The costumes were described as pretty and new. The acts were considered first-class and Professor Gearhardt's horses were thought to be outstanding. The show continued in a southward direction while remaining in New Jersey. It completed its first touring week with stands at Bordentown (5/5), and Burlington (5/6) which is across the Delaware River from Philadelphia and some what north there of. Burlington gave excellent business and fine reviews of the performance and the show's cadre. W. W. Cole visited at that town.

Camden (5/8) started the new week with a bang in all regards. Keeping in mind that Camden was a large manufacturing city with a busy waterfront that directly competed with Philadelphia, but a 1,000 yards away on the opposite bank of the Delaware. It was use to the largest circuses with their headline performers. Nevertheless, the Camden press accorded the Robbins Aggregation the highest of praises. One paper said: "(T)he Robbins show while not as large as other shows that pay annual visits to this city is a representative show and is all that word Circus implies. One finds everything in a smaller degree, the clowns that delighted the grandfathers are the old stand doing new business, the horses show greater cleverness than ever before and the acrobats perform feats that send chills of dread up and down the spine.

"Hillary Long, the greatest head artist in the world bounced up and down a flight of stairs like a rubber ball doing all kinds of difficult feats with the strength of his neck and hardness of his head. The flying Glendales performed some of the greatest feats of skill and nerve ever seen before in a circus ring leaping from one trapeze to another and from end to end of the tent. It would be hard to pick any particular feature. The Company has called the show an all-feature circus and this is literally true. It is feature circus and all acts are well worth seeing at any time. The Robbins Show will always be welcome in Camden." When one couples these laudatory remarks with sterling business, Camden was a fine way to start any week. Not unlike George Washington, Adam Forepaugh, Jr. crossed the Delaware to take in the performance at Camden. There were no British in sight. Robbins followed Downie & Wheeler's by about 10 days at Salem (5/9) which did not take the shine off the box-office receipts. This situation was repeated the next day at Millville, New Jersey where every

seat was taken at night necessitating straw to be spread in front of the reserves. Even that wasn't enough as many folks stood for the performance which was greatly appreciated by all including the standees. It was just a short trip of 13 miles to the next stand at Bridgeton (5/11) where business remained good in this largest town in southern New Jersey.

Robbins then turned north with a long jump to Lakewood which was followed by Keyport (5/13). At this latter town, the show had a mediocre afternoon which was followed record breaking evening performance. Once again people were seated on the straw and except for the short change artist and ticket speculators, the circus was greatly enjoyed. Interestingly the bunko artists did not do much business. However there was however a row following the afternoon performance, strictly between circus employees. A man leading a horse became separated from the reins and the horse ran into one of the bosses who in turn struck the man. The horse man then took a club to the boss. Others joined in the fracas and soon there was a full-fledge donnybrook underway. Ultimately the horse man was severely beaten and appealed to a local magistrate for justice. When assured that he would be paid for his past services, the horse man dropped all charges and was on his way. There is no report if he was actually paid the sum due him. So it seems there was more excitement taking place on the Robbins show than just in the center ring. Also on May 13, the reported that 20 baggage horses were recently added to the Robbins herd. In addition, in the same edition Robbins had a box listing of the standout features of the performance. Hilliary Long was not listed but this may have been do to the fact that he joined the show after the mat was created.

Continuing north in New Jersey, Robbins started to walk in the footsteps of Downie & Wheeler again and this is never good for business. The fact that Robbins presented a significantly better and larger show than this 10-car competition, and was very well known in this area, does not make up for the fact that Robbins was second in. Surprisingly, Westfield (5/15) was just fine with two good houses with Downie & Wheeler being merely six days ahead. But Plainfield did not measure up as the footprints of Downie & Wheeler were still fresh. The same applied to Somerville (5/17). Some relief from Downie & Wheeler was afforded at Flemington with the resulting upsurge in business but it was back to the same old story at High Bridge (5/19). By just removing $200 or $300 from the take could and did turn a winner into a loser and that is what was happening. In addition, the advertising budget was

The California Frank's Wild West Show provided opposition for Robbins in 1911.



increased with much larger newspaper ads being placed before the public to attract maximum attention. The fact that Downie & Wheeler was a new name to all of the potential patrons (it being the first year of this title) may have also added to its luster. For whatever reason, this new show had a negative impact upon Mr. Robbins pocketbook. Dover closed the week of this intense competition with fine reviews, if not fine business. In the May 20 issue of the *Clipper*, the reporter reviewed the Downie & Wheeler Circus at its Plainfield stand (5/10). He reported great business in the locale and characterized the business to date as "wonderful". In the same issue, Robbins business was represented as being the biggest in his (Robbins) career in these opposition towns. However, although business was generally good, it is difficult to believe it was the best ever.

Things got even more intense the next week at Morristown (5/22) as the 11 car California Frank's All Star Wild West joined the fray. It was first in on May 8, followed by Downie & Wheeler on May 15 and last, but certainly not least, our hero on May 22. Amazingly business for Frank A. was very good with a "packed to suffocation" turnout for the night show. Very good reviews were had and the papers stated that it was possible to be pleased with all three presentations, being as different as they were. Then it was a journey north of slightly more than 30 miles to visit Frank A.'s son at Newton Academy where Milton was enrolled. Oh yes, while the show was there it also played to very good houses, especially at night which enjoyed a capacity house. Once again, California Frank was less than two weeks ahead. It also experienced good business. After a day at Hackettstown, the show crossed the Delaware Water Gap into the Keystone State for a heavily competed date at Stroudsburg (5/25). There were fresh wagon tracks all over the place with Downie & Wheeler just a week

ahead and California Frank a mere four days ahead of Andrew's and Al's herd of troubadours.

Nevertheless, Frank A. scored mightily with the press and the patrons alike. The press labeled the show as the best circus ever to visit that locale. It commented "The man that walks on his head (Hilliary Long) and another that does the same stunt (again Hilliary Long must have been in another costume and wore a mustache), only a little different, that is in balancing himself on his head on a trapeze and drinks, smokes, everything that a man usually can do well enough standing on terra firma were among the thrillers. The turn of the black stallions (Carl Gearhart), and the clog dancing of one of the horses was another number that pleased all. The lady (Belle Clark) with the educated horse, dogs and pigeons was one of the cleverest things that has been seen here. All were trained to the height of perfection and they seemed specially anxious to perform their part of the show. The bareback riders, the acrobats (Herbert Bros.), the Japanese balancers, the clowns, well in fact, everything was all that could be expected. Little Ruth, the midget horse, claimed to be six years old, and the den of snakes exhibited in a wagon on Main Street attracted many visitors."



The Downie and Wheeler show was a problem for Robbins in 1911.

It was back across the Delaware River into New Jersey for a date at Washington (5/26). Again Robbins followed Downie & Wheeler by a week which in turn followed California Frank by less than that. There was a remarkable exchange between the Mayor of Washington and Frank A. set forth on the front page of succeeding issues of the weekly Washington Star commencing with the Mayor's comments in the May 25 edition. Under the headline "THE MAYOR WRITES ABOUT THE CIRCUS," the very lengthy article read in part, "A circus is something that comes to town every one in awhile to disturb the tranquillity of the community. You can tell when a circus is coming by the big, red posters that are stuck up all over town showing men falling out of the skies and women being shot out of the mouths of cannons. Averages at school tumble as the date for a circus approaches. Circus day is a big day for old and young. We have common drunks around town who sober up on circus day so they will be sure not to miss it. This is the only day in the whole year some of them are sober. Others make circus day the one day in the year to be drunk.

"Very often a thousand or two people go to see a circus. Of course, that doesn't include everybody. No, indeed. Generally about twice that many people get excited when a circus comes to town and they crowd around the railroad tracks to watch them unload. It doesn't cost a cent to see a circus unload. Another free thing about a circus is the grand street pageant in the morning. The entire company, the riggers and stable men put on all the jewelry and spangles and gilded stuff they can dig up and march through two or three of the principle (sic) streets.

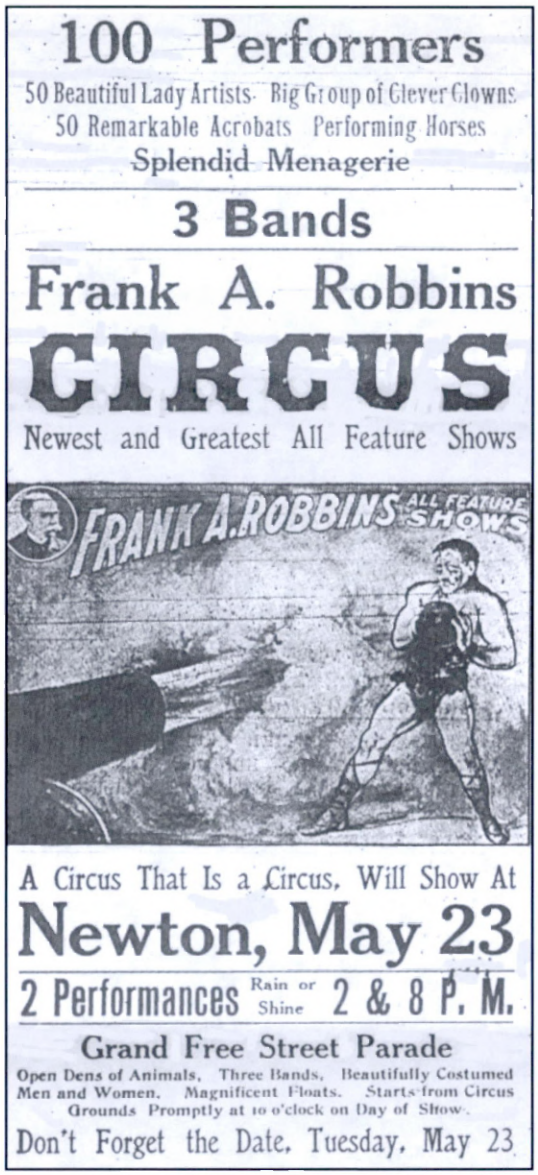
"They string out the parade as much as possible in an endeavor to make much out of little. All good circuses have a man at the head of the parade telling the crowd about the wonderful 'free exhibition immediately after the parade', while a steam calliope brings up the rear. A band in the center of the parade plays off and on but doesn't make as much noise as the man at the front or the steam organ at the rear. One good thing about a steam calliope with a circus is that they always render that old familiar hit, 'Smoky Mokes.' They never play this nice little piece on the a steam calliope in real circus style unless the pipes are about thirty degrees off pitch. While the parade is passing you will observe a mouthy individual lined up along the curb trying to make himself heard. He is selling souvenirs. Now and then somebody from Karrsville buys a badge or the likes of that.

"One striking thing about a circus parade is the clown. He generally rides in a go cart drawn by a donkey. Some clowns are stupid, while others are too fresh. You take a fresh clown, for instance. See him wave his hand at the children. If you will watch him closely you will observe that he does most of his waving at children who have got their mothers with them. Some mothers like to be waved at, even if it only by a clown. If clowns would only wave at little girls it

would be all right. But sometimes they wave at the bigger ones and that makes folks talk. In the circus performances clowns are not much more than a nuisance. The most realistic thing about them is to see them run with a pail. That seems to be a part of a clown's paraphernalia. Sometimes, for the sake of novelty, they introduce a paddle and belabor each other where the pads are thickest. Clown ponies, clown dogs, and clown monkeys are sometimes very funny. Human clowns are only tiresome.

"Inside the big tent, in the middle, you will observe two sections of rather desirable seats. These are reserved seats. Those who pay their way in are put over at the far ends of the tent. The reserved seats are for the press and others who drew complimentary. There is some advantage in having a reserved seat. In the first place the view is better and in the second place the upholstery is an improvement over the general seats. But all the seats, be they reserved seats or of the common kind, are as hard as rocks and will give a healthy person Brights Disease, lumbago and curvature of the spine. Yet despite all this, we know society women who will balance themselves on those narrow seats and wear ridges into themselves with nary a move for two hours; while the same ones will flop themselves into a Morris rocker at home and complain of being tired inside of 20 minutes. And, worse than that, we have society women who will sit all through a performance at the side of some voracious tobacco chewer with never a murmur. If she had to undergo the ordeal at anything else than circus she would call the police.

"Men will wear their best duds and sit on muddy circus seats who wouldn't think of climbing on a rail fence with their Sunday pantaloons on. It isn't such a task after all to sit on one of those uncomfortable seats at a good circus. The real ordeal comes when the men with peanuts and crackerjacks begin to vend their wares. They step on your feet, fall over you and ram their baskets into your hat. Most of these venders are clowns and therefore you take it as a joke and laugh. Another industrious individual who flits through the seats more than he ought to flit is the fellow who sells the ice cream cones. It takes a good stomach to go against that circus ice cream cone proposition. Circus ice cream venders do not smell like vanilla, strawberry or bisque. On the contrary, they smell like horses. You've got to have some stomach too, to go against the ice cold lemonade game. You can generally see things in the lemonade glasses--and they are not lemons either. It looks like Delaware River water dipped a half mile below Easton. (Apparently where the Easton sewage was dumped into the Delaware.)



A 1911 Robbins newspaper ad. Author's collection.

"The circus performance is more or less incidental. It starts with a parade. Some man pulls out a silver whistle, blows on it and the band lines up at one end of the tent. Then they march once around the ring. Everyone connected with the circus joins in the parade and they bring every piece of paraphernalia they have so as to make a big show. The frying pans are about the only things that don't appear in the parade. After the parade, the exhibition starts. The horses run out, the dogs run out, the acrobats run out, the bareback riders run out and the clowns run out--each in his own particular stunt. Bye and bye Reynard, the daredevil bicycle rider, appears. He is advertised to do a demon's dash. Eyes are riveted upon him and the spectators watch with bated breath. You can tell that it is bated breath, because the band stops playing just to add effect to the daring act to make it more awe-inspiring. After it is all over the band resumes playing and you start breathing again.

"Pretty soon a young man does to the center of the stage, waves to the band to cease and states that it affords him great pleasure to announce that all the popular songs and music heard at this show are contained in the attractive little book that he holds in his hand. Ordinarily this wonderful book is sold at a quarter but on this special occasion the price has been reduced to ten cents. It tickles the spectators immensely to learn that representatives would pass among them selling these books. Then the show resumes and about the time everyone gets interested in the ponies and clowns, along comes another man who waves his hand officiously at the band. When all beneath the great tent becomes silent, this fellow announces that he has a few words to say in behalf of the management. He wants everyone to understand that the big show is not yet half over but he takes this opportunity to give an outline of the

excellent after show, in which may be seen the finest stars on the vaudeville stage. This after show is to be entirely different from the usual vaudeville show presented by other circuses and you will miss the opportunity of a lifetime if you let it pass. A dime, ten cents, sees it all--a regular dollar show. Agents pass through the crowd with tickets just as soon as the band strikes up again. Of course, you stay, because at circuses you get reckless and entirely forget the high cost of living and all other troubles. But the dollar show that you anticipated falls several degrees short. After it is over you really can't see where you got your ten cents' worth because about all you saw was a lot of hustlers tearing down the seats and loading them in preparation for a journey to the next town.

"You know what Barnum said about the American people."

Again this-not-the-strongest-endorsement was published one day before Frank A's arrival. Its effect is not known but the show drew only mediocre business in the afternoon and a near full house in the evening. The performance was considered to be of the highest-class, the best ever to play the town. Days earlier, California Frank drew poor business in Washington. Also of particular interest, contained in this review was the statement that the show would be playing Michigan during the summer. So Frank A's ultimate destination was generally known. However, how he was going to get there remained a most serious question. More about this shortly.

A few days after the Robbins circus day, the *Washington Star* published on its front page, an interview of Frank A. Robbins. Under the banner headline, ROBBINS, THE OLD TIME CIRCUS MAN, our hero shared some important experiences with the Mayor, who wrote the aforementioned column in the previous week's edition. "When Frank A. Robbins, the circus man, was here last Friday, he took 20 minutes to show me around, possibly considering this is a mighty good excuse to get away from some teamsters who were bothering him about that time.

Robbins has been following the circus business since the Centennial



James DuVal, principal clown on Robbins in 1911. Pfening Archives.

year and has been running a circus of his own for over 25 years.

"'You must have made some money in this business,' I said to him. 'Well no, I can't say that I have grown rich,' he replied. 'I might have put away some money had I held fast to it. Since 1886 I have probably made $10,000 a year, but out of this I have raised two families and put several children through college. I have been a free liver and most of the money got away from me as fast as I made it.'

"'I suppose it was easier to make money in the circus business 20 years ago than it is today,' I remarked. 'No, I think the chance is just as good as it ever was. In the five weeks what we have been out this season, we have done better than in any previous season. We showed to better crowds at Morristown, Dover and Newton than ever before. At Newton 3,400 people witness the evening performance. At Stroudsburg last night our receipts were $200 better than upon any previous visit in that town.'

"'You don't have the tough elements following you that characterized circuses 20 years ago,' I suggested. 'We don't need them.' he replied. 'Twenty or thirty years ago we virtually had to fight our way through some communities. We had to have men with us. All this has changed of late years.' Although Robbins didn't say so, it is a fact that the old-time band of gamblers that followed circuses have been almost eliminated. Circuses don't have to have such men to gather up the loose change any more. They have a more polished way of doing it now and the man who sold tin whistles by the basketful last Friday night suggests one way of gathering up spare nickels that by chance escape the box office or the outside attractions."

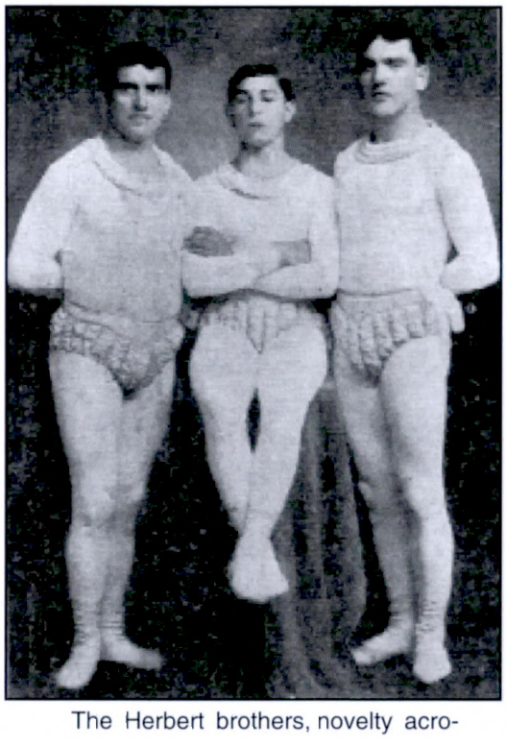
Mr. Robbins had the facility to mix fact and fiction with the press. His comments regarding his inability to hold onto a buck is probably accurate. Conversely, his contention that he made $10,000 a year since 1886 we know to be totally without foundation. Consider 1888, 89, 90, 91 93, 98, 06, and 07 just to mention a few years when the box office receipts were particularly lean. Nevertheless it was a valued interview.

The show headed to the New York metropolitan area being careful to remain in New Jersey and not actually venture into New York State. The fairly large cities of Hackensack (5/29), Passaic (5/30), and Orange (5/31) and the smaller one of Montclair (6/1) were almost in sight of the Big Apple. At Hackensack, Frank A. followed California Frank by only one day. Both shows did just fine. Six new, gray horses arrived there and made a good impression upon towners and showfolks alike. At Orange, Frank A. finally beat California Frank into a town. Business was good for both shows and that scenario was replicated at Montclair, both in terms of business and beating California Frank into the town. At this point, Robbins made the commitment to go west and headed in that general direction

playing first Butler (6/2) and then Sussex (6/3), where at the latter stand happy folks and an equally happy box office were experienced.

Bad weather found the show at Belvidere (6/5) and a southeaster prevented most from attending the afternoon performance. With the storm alleviating, the evening turned out about a three quarters audience of very pleased patrons. The weather wasn't much better at Phillipsburg (across the Delaware from Easton, Pennsylvania) the next day but business was outstanding in spite of it. A couple of weeks earlier, California Frank experienced similar weather and did not get off the lot until 5 AM the next day. The western trek began with a passage through Pennsylvania beginning at Quakertown (6/7). There business was fine in the afternoon but less so in the evening as a heavy rain caused many to stay home. It was noted that the various side shows were well patronized including a miniature horse that was exhibited nearby the circus lot in front of a local home. The Bucks County seat of Doylestown enjoyed the Robbins circus and provided lots of pleased folks to fill the seats including capacity business in the evening. A new competitor, Welsh Brothers preceded Frank A. by about two weeks. That one ring enterprise also had two very large houses. It is interesting to note that Welsh Bros. was sponsored by the local fire department, one of the first times that this writer had observed the use of auspices.

The show continued in a generally westerly direction picking up coal region towns such as Tamaqua (6/12) and Minersville (6/13) experiencing inclement weather in the process before descending into the Amish country for a date at the large town of Lebanon (6/16). There, large crowds visited both performances which were described as a "rich treat." In a location which was big enough to attract the largest shows, its populous considered the Robbins outfit to be the best one ring circus around. This notion of excellence was enhanced by the fact that a Lebanon County girl, Margaret Potteiger, was featured acrobat. She was closely watched by the audience who greatly admired her great skill. (It is believed that Ms. Potteiger was a member of the Herbert Troupe.) A less appealing incident took place when departing Lebanon. Apparently a fight started between circus employees while on the train. Albert Miller who must have been the loser, was thrown from the train. He was picked up by some towners and taken to the Lebanon Hospital for necessary repairs, retrofits and perhaps an attitude adjustment.



The Herbert brothers, novelty acrobats in 1911. Pfening Archives.

We have mentioned on a number of occasions that Robbins was a respected member of the circus owners community. It appears that he wrote to many of his peers on a rather frequent basis. He felt free to ask penetrating about the business prospects in areas where his knowledge was limited. While looking to flesh out his route to and from Michigan, he must have contacted a number of his colleagues regarding certain proposed routing schemes. We are fortunate to have copies of three such letters to circus owners whom we will recognize. I am quite sure that there were others.

In a letter dated June 13, 1911, John F. Robinson wrote as follows: "Friend Frank: Your letter arrived this morning and I can assure you I was very glad to hear from you. Since I have ceased to be active in Circus Business my old friends have forgotten me. Now Frank, I am awful glad you are doing so well, but some of the towns you mention in Ohio, I don't put much faith in. I am afraid you will be right in harvest time. Harvest in Ohio commences about 4th of July and lasts until 1 August. It looks as though the hay and wheat corps will be big. The towns you mention with one or two exceptions are very bad. I fear Michigan is no better with plenty of opposition. Now Frank, there is a world of good towns in this state (Ohio) just your size and good for five to ten hundred a day with chances of fifteen to twenty every now and then. I am afraid that Sun Bros., Sparks & Gentry will get these towns that I am thinking of. If you can hit them after harvest, about August 1st, you will have to hire some one to count your money for you. Steubenville, Ravenna, East Liverpool and Leetonia are all Ringling-Barnum towns and your show is too small. I have not heard from mine or any other show since the season opened. The business here (Cincinnati) for the Barnum show was awfully poor. Would judge about 3 or 4 thousand a day and I guess their expenses is at least 5 thousand a day. They and Ringling should get ten to twelve thousand a day. It (Barnum) is a fine big show, the best circus I have ever seen with them. Appears to be no one around except Hutchinson. None of the Ringlings. I think they are killing the show in the interest of the Ringling show."

Notwithstanding Mr. Robinson's advice, Frank A. crossed Ohio in July and played Steubenville, Ravenna and East Liverpool amongst 8 other towns on the way to Michigan. It could be that he did not have any alternative if he was going to get to Michigan. We do know that neither Barnum nor Ringling played the 3 aforementioned towns during their 1911 tours.

Robbins must have continued to write letters to his friends seeking the right path to proceed upon. On

July 16, Charles Sparks penned a letter from Calias, Maine which read in part: "Dear friend Robbins: Yours at hand. Met your friend and extended all courtesies I could to him. bad week last week. Belfont and Machion only days I got the nut. balance all very bad. Can't follow Downie and Wheeler. Very poor performance. Now if you make the Eastern shore (Delmarva) dont follow them. you are better off one day ahead of them. am sending you Haags route as it is not contracted, also Downie and Wheeler. I don't know any more ? as in Ohio. There are lots of five hundred dollar towns but very few thousand. now I look for you to get around a thousand at Port Clinton (Ohio), Oak Harbor (Ohio) six hundred and Morenci (Mich) eight hundred. Let me know which way you are coming out of Michigan and what you want of Pa and I may able to help you. Keep these routes to yourself. you may already have them but will send them any way. Write often."

On the same day (July 16th), Jerry Mugivan, then managing the Howe's Great London show, wrote: "Friend Robbins: Yours received. am glad to hear from you. This country is bad (relatively remote areas in Canada) no population. Get big prices but show to 4 or 5 hundred tickets a day. and they still remember the Cole Bros show. Maine? (Walter L?) is now general agent of the Sanger Show (also owned by Mugivan et al) and you can split that territory up if you could see him. This week past was one of the worst. We lost a day account of stock car getting off track on one of these branches. It took us all day to 6:30 to get started again. was on and off 3 times and had to lay new track twice. This railroad is one of its only kind in existence. All runs are long and you give only 1 show a day so you can know what we are up against." Howes continued west in Canada for another month or so exiting in northwest U.S. It is not known if Frank A. made contact with the Sanger show and if so, what the result was. It seems that no one was getting rich or having it easy.

Meanwhile, Frank A. continued his tour of Pennsylvania with a date at Gettysburg (6/19) which turned out



James E. Gordon, Robbins press and mail agent in 1911. Pfening Archives.

to be a day well spent. Similar good report cards were recorded at the next two towns, Shippensburg and Steelton. At the latter town, during the night performance it was noticed by some show folks that the women's dressing tent's sidewall was slashed by peepers. A melee ensued and a show laborer picked up a tent stake and applied same to the bodies of the peepers. In the process, he broke several of their arms. Then bricks started flying through the air striking several of the showmen. The police were called and peace was reestablished with the circus being the masters of the situation. At Mifflintown (6/22), Robbins followed the large 101 Ranch Show by less than two weeks. The entire review of the opening date at Jersey City, originally published in the *Billboard* back in April, was set forth in the Juniata Herald of Mifflintown. It must have convinced many locals to attend as they did so in goodly numbers. In return, they enjoyed a fine performance. Tyrone (6/23) contributed a large audience in the afternoon and a half house at night. Before the night show, over a hundred of the circus folks gathered at the local cemetery for memorial services at the gravesites of victims of the 1893 Walter L. Main train wreck that took place nearby. As the extensive Pennsylvania journey was approaching its completion, rain became a factor. At Latrobe, a driving rain had the clowns in the circus parade singing *How Dry I Am* with verve and verbosity. Everything in the parade was drenched but the locals huddling under umbrellas and store awnings enjoyed it anyway. The continuing rain did not abet attendance there. After several stands in the greater Pittsburgh area, Frank A. exited the state after a date in McDonald (6/30).

A single date was scheduled in West Virginia at Wellsburg (7/1). Then Ohio was entered with a Monday stand (7/3) at Steubenville, situated on the Ohio River. Not too far up the river was East Liverpool where Frank A. planned to spend the Nation's birthday. He did and he didn't. The town of Chester is on the south bank of the Ohio, a stones throw from East Liverpool which is on the north bank. A license to play Chester was granted to the show in a timely manner by the Chester town clerk. The local railroad granted Frank A. permission to cross its bridge at no charge under the overview of railroad inspectors. On June 30th, Mr. Robbins received notices from the town clerk that the license had been revoked and the railroad withdrew its permission to use its bridge.

Undaunted, the show found another lot at Newell, but a mile of so from the Chester lot and it played there. Business suffered somewhat from the last minute shift of lots in different jurisdictions but the Newell lot would be the lot of choice in the future. At Ravenna (7/7), showman Tom Barton enjoyed visiting his home town; so much so that he invited his fellow ticket sellers and agents to dinner which was much enjoyed. This rapid transit across Ohio reached Lake Erie at Port Clinton (7/13) and Oak Harbor (7/14). The next day, Frank A. reached for his personal nirvana, Michigan. Why this state was so attractive to him or whether he, in fact, found the business that he was seeking is still a mystery. We can only report the conflicting information, as we know it.

The 39 stands tour of Michigan began a mile above the Ohio state



New letterhead design first used in 1911. It was printed in red, gold and green. Pfening Archives.

line at the village of Morenci on July 15th and was completed a mile above the Indiana state line at the town of Sturgis on August 29th. In between, the show proceeded up central Michigan until Rose City (7/24), made a quick trip to the Lake Huron coast at E. Tawas (7/25), then a dash to the northern most point of lower Michigan, Mackinaw (7/29), following by a descent down to midway on the Lake Michigan coast to Ludington (8/10), back through the central part of the State culminating in a couple of stands in the greater Detroit area, Northville (8/19) and Wayne (8/22), and finally generally headed south west reaching Coldwater (8/28) and exiting the next day at Sturgis.

And the all-important report card? Certainly mixed because of the inconsistent data at hand. In two succeeding mid-July issues of *Billboard* reported on the circus scene then extant in Michigan as follows: "Michigan is crowded with circuses, wild west shows and street carnivals. They all can not get money as it is not in that state at this time for them all." It followed next week with: "Michigan is have a surfeit of tented shows this summer. The following well known outdoor attractions are touting the Wolverine territory: Frank A. Robbins Shows, Sanger Bros. Combined Shows, Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Shows, Sun Bros. Shows, 101 Ranch Wild West Show, Barkoots's Worlds Greatest Shows (carnival). There are also numerous minor organizations playing the intertowns traveling overland." In early August this publication commented on the wonderful weather that was being experienced in Michigan. However it went on to state: "It is said that the Frank Robbins's Show is finding hard work securing Michigan time. The state is being played off the boards by big and little shows alike. All cannot get the money," On the other hand, the *New York Clipper* reported on September 23rd that on the Robbins show "(a)ll hands nearly wept when leaving Michigan, as everyone had a month and a half of real pleasure, and big business favored us all along the line." This notion of a good or even excellent tour was reinforced by a *Billboard* citation of the same date: ". . . after thirty-three days in Michigan where it played to the largest business in years. But two bad days were had, both due to heavy rains." Convinced one way or the other yet? Well the following letter may be most revealing. On August 9th, John F. Robinson had this to say to our hero. "Friend Frank: Your several letters all received but I have been east and just got back a few days ago. So that is the reason I did not answer. Johns show is doing good. As I understand some of the others are doing well but I hear your show is not doing well. I am sorry, as you ought to be in the swim.

"Now if you will come away from Michigan and Indiana and all that opposition and get down here (Ohio), I feel sure I can give you 2 or 3 weeks business from 5 or 6 hundred to 2000 a day. I feel so positive that I would bet all I have got (which was probably quite a bit). Only thing is weather and must be before the middle of September while the County Fairs are going. Half of the towns will pay you to take them. I am not talking out of the top of my head either. I would like to see you get the money. It is there. All they want is a show of your size to come and get it."

After a reasonably good date at its first stand after Michigan, LaGrange, Indiana (8/30), and a couple of additional stands in the Hoosier State heading east, if one was looking closely, one would observe the Frank A. Robbins Show spending a week marching across Ohio. Who knows whether these dates proved as lucrative as John F. Robinson indicated. Hopefully they did, to make up at least in part for the apparent losses sustained in Michigan. As a last thought regarding Michigan, Frank A. did venture into the domain of the Wolverine only once again, that being during the next year, but not for an extended tour. Draw your own conclusions about the level of business experienced in that state.

It will be recalled that after the death of the large elephant, Queen, Frank A. was left with the small elephant, Babe, as his herd of pachyderms. It is presumed that only Babe was on the 1911 show. This was not a satisfactory situation as it presented an image of small-time to the viewing public during the parade. He was determined to correct this image problem.

On July 20th, Frank A. wrote to the Ringling Brothers as follows: "Your wire received. Would be glad to have the elephant if not lame or bad. Am badly in need of an elephant or two. Could also use one or two cages if you have anything at home you would dispose of. Our business good. Had only 2 light weeks since we opened." (Note: the statement on business could in fact be reasonably accurate as his circus had just entered Michigan). Apparently he reached some agreement with the Ringlings regarding purchasing an elephant. On August 2nd, he wrote to the Ringlings again. "Your favor received. We are well pleased with the elephant. She is gentle and a fine animal. We have taken all of the chains off of her except one in the parade. Elephants are like sheep and they follow the leader. The

Barnum show elephants all ran away in Troy, New York and raised cane generally a long time ago but I never heard of their doing this a second time. I do not believe there will ever be any trouble with any of yours again. We are well pleased with everything. We have even bought from you and will be glad to buy as much of the surplus property you may have to sell as we can. Note what you say about price paid for elephant and will be governed accordingly. Hope your brother John has fully recovered from his accident." It is unclear what the price for the elephant actually was. However it may have been paid by in part or in full by a note in the following manner. In a letter from the Ringling Brothers to Robbins dated November 22, 1911, it was stated: "We have your letter of the 14th inst. With reference to the note, we have arranged with the Bank of Baraboo, Baraboo, Wisconsin, who holds your note, that you will pay $200.00 on the same, and that the time will be extended nine months on the remaining $300.00. We believe this is in accordance with you request. Kindly remit the $200.00 direct to the Bank of Baraboo." It could easily be conjectured that if this exchange involved the purchase of the elephant, the original price may have approximated $1,000 with a 50% down payment with the remainder due at the end of the season. Available cash may have been a bit short so Frank A. requested an extension to the note as he could pay only $300 at that time, with the remaining $200 in the mid 1912 season when presumably more money would be available. The shortage of cash may have been due to a shortfall in anticipated season profits or, as likely, the need to maintain a liquid position for the upcoming auction of the 18 car Famous Robinson Shows which Robbins had certain goals relative to equipment being offered. This auction will be addressed later in this writing.

After a quick dash across Ohio and four dates spanning West Virginia, the show reached comfortably familiar territory in Maryland, starting at Brunswick (9/15). The next day at Annapolis, very good business was enjoyed at both performances. The presentation was applauded by all attendees. Of particular interest was the description of Belle Clark's act which included four trained fantailed pigeons, and a little dog together with a dancing horse, all of whom responded directly to the vocal commands of the lady trainer. Heading north to just beyond the Mason-Dixon line, the show picked up Delta in Pennsylvania (9/18) and then reversed its direction for a short run to Bel Air, Maryland. It was another short run and a fine day at Havre de Grace (9/20) at the mouth of the impressive Susquehanna where it empties into the northern reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. Then the circus invaded Delmarva. Chestertown, Maryland was the first stand (9/21). If a person looked at the ground, he would have seen the recently placed Downie & Wheeler wagon tracks. Although the latter show had good day, Robbins' business was locally described as great. The entire operation was called the cleanest and best circus ever to visit that town. It was noted that because of the significant contribution of the Robbins' troupe in fighting a large fire in Chestertown the previous year, the town Commissioners granted the license and water supply without charge. What goes around, comes around. Nice to see. At Centreville (9/22), Robbins followed Downie & Wheeler by a week and preceded the overland show, Prairie Lillie's and Nebraska Bill's Combined Wild West Show by a couple of days. Still the Robbins' aggregation did ok and greatly pleased the locals. The absence of the elephant Queen was noted and nothing was said about any other elephant on the show which is curious. "The numerous other wild animals were well worth seeing." In contrast, Prairie Lillie had a tough day. Several performers were seriously hurt doing their thing, and an equal number left the show before the evening performance. The show did go on but was less robust than it would otherwise have been.



The Frank A. Robbins big show band in 1911. Pfening Archives.

The show crossed the nearby border of Delaware to visit its capital Dover (9/26). It then headed south staying in Delaware for a Georgetown date which was very heavily billed. It followed Downie and Wheeler by five days but that circumstance did little to affect the fine business done by our hero. On the other hand, Downie & Wheeler's elephant became infuriated when one of the attaches attempted to force the elephant up the gangplank into its rail car. Apparently the elephant considered the platform unsafe. It turned and ran up the street, knocking down several people in the process. Eventually the elephant calmed down and none of the injuries sustained were serious. At Milford (9/27), Downie & Wheeler preceded Robbins by a week. Business for both shows was not remarkable. It was back into Maryland at Cambridge (9/30) where five days separated the two shows with Downie & Wheeler getting in first

once again. Salisbury (10/4) and Crisfield (10/5) were no different. Finally at Eastville, Virginia (10/9), which is almost at the tip of Delmarva, the shows separated. Alone in all its glory, Frank A. enjoyed a fine days business with well satisfied customers. With the season quickly concluding, the circus headed north toward its winter quarters in Jersey City. It reached Easton, Maryland (10/11) where it was very cold. The weather held business down in the afternoon but the evening house was fairly good. Winter was certainly coming and recognizing this fact, the final stand of the season was scheduled for a week later at Bristol, Pennsylvania (10/18). This date was not without its sad story as Theodore Kramer, an acrobat with the show, was killed by an express train as he exited the circus train into its path. The show canceled its performance as a result of this incident and journeyed directly to quarters. At that point both the press agent, Dr. James Gordon and Frank A. visited the showmen's journals claiming that 1911 was one of the best ever experienced. Highly unlikely, although it is believed the show came home in the black.

1880 31st Annual Tour 1911

Official Route No. 13

THE FRANK A. ROBBINS SHOWS

BERGEN AMUSEMENT CO.
(OWNERS)

	Miles
July 20—Eaton Rapids, Mich.	45
July 21—Leslie, Mich.	30
July 22 St. Charles	70
Sunday, July 23	
July 24—Rose City, Mich.	109
July 25—East Tawas	44
July 26—Harrisville, Mich.	31
July 27—Onoway, Mich.	79
July 28—Cheboygan, Mich.	26
July 29—Mackinaw, Mich.	16
Sunday, July 30	
July 31—Pellston, Mich.	17
Aug. 1—Petoskey, Mich.	18
Aug. 2—Charlevoix, Mich.	15

J. E. GORDON, Mail Agent

Robbins 1911 route card No. 13. Pfening Archives.

Although the season was over, the excitement continued; this time in the form of an auction of a significant show property. The Robinson's Famous Shows was a medium size railer that played primarily in the midwest during its initial season of 1910 and then again 1911. It was owned by Danny Robinson at the outset but later had somehow acquired the leading thief of the day, Bunk Allen as a partner. There may have been other partners as well but during 1911 it was Bunk Allen who ruled the roost. With Mr. Allen's inspired leadership, it did not take too long before the show ran out of money (not due to a lack of business) and folded at Morganfield, Kentucky on August 31. There was an auction of the show property at Morganfield on September 27. The property was purchased in its entirety by Frank A.'s friends of old, Fiss, Doerr & Carroll, for approximately $29,000. Fiss et al had no interest in owning the show and much like they did in early 1910, put the show property up for auction, piecemeal. This auction took place in Indianapolis on November 24. Unlike 1910, there is no evidence that Frank A. assisted Fiss et al in this auction. However, he was a potential buyer of equipment. It had been noted that he was very interested in acquiring both parade and baggage wagons to replace units already on the show. Robinson's Famous provided the opportunity to fully satisfy this need and to the extent of our knowledge, it did just that. It was reported in the trade journals at that time that cages went for fair prices of $150 to $300 each while the baggage wagons were a bargain, selling for $70 to $90 each. And of great importance to us, Robbins was the successful bidder on much of this equipment. Normally at auctions, the successful buyer must pay for the purchases before taking physical possession. While it is recognized that Frank A. had a long standing and apparently close relationship with Fiss et al, and, as such, possibly was permitted to pay for the equipment over time, nothing has been revealed to date to indicate same. So we are left to presume that Frank A. had sufficient cash at hand to pay for the items he bought which amount probably was around $2,000. The total auction revenue exceeded $39,000 resulting in a profit of $8,000 or so to Fiss et al, after factoring in all related expenses. Not a bad month's work.

Regarding the cage wagons bought at the auction, one of those wagons exists today at the Circus World Museum, #85. In later years, Milt Robbins advised that his father paid $200 for this handsome cage. However it was not used as a cage wagon while on the Robbins Show. Rather it was used as a bandwagon on the parade but served a double purpose by hauling trunks during the less glamorous activity of conveying the circus about the United States. There were apparently a number of wagons secured by Mr. Robbins at this time including very possibly, the important Carl Hagenbeck bandwagon which was first seen during the 1905 season. If in fact he actually purchased the vehicle at the auction or was acting as an agent for another who did buy it there, Frank A. offered to sell the bandwagon in December 1911 for $500. The vehicle did not accompany Robbins to the Jersey City winter quarters at that time and was being offered from its storage facility in Indianapolis, Indiana. To the best of our knowledge, this wagon never traveled with the Robbins show. It is thought by some to have eventuated to the Wheeler aggregation in 1916 with some rest stops in between.

Having said all that, was the 1911 season the happy romp across the several states as portrayed by Winona Robbins Anders in her route book poem? It seems doubtful. However, Frank A. had sufficient financial wherewithal to buy an elephant in mid season, and outlay a fair amount of money for new equipment at the end of the season. And if that isn't enough proof that there was some money around, he bought a new Packard for the Mrs. early in 1912. So in reflection, perhaps there was some truth in the "Pretend" poem. We certainly hope so.

Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART TWENTY-FOUR

By David W. Watt

Editor's note. The dates listed are the days this article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.

July 24, 1915

In sizing up the weather for years back, so far as it has to do with the circus, this season, I think, has been the hardest one on shows since 1880. Although other seasons have seen much rain, yet they would get the sunshine at intervals for at least a few days. But this year has certainly been a hard one on the circus and especially those who started out with a small bank account. Yet it was different today to what was thirty-five years ago, for then all the smaller shows went by wagon; and today if they are ever so small, they almost invariably are on the car.

Burr Robbins, famous Wisconsin showman. Circus World Museum collection.



In 1880, we opened the season with the Burr Robbins show on the third of May at Delavan, Wis.; and while the afternoon was cloudy and cold, we did not get any rain until evening. When it was about time for the doors to open, it commenced with a cold drizzling rain and from that on for twenty-two days we only saw one warm sunshiny day. And yet while it rained almost continuously, the show did a good business every day. It rained so hard that it was impossible for the farmers to work the land, and everybody seemed to come to the show.

We went from Delavan to Elkhorn, Elkhorn to Whitewater, Whitewater to Fort Atkinson, Fort Atkinson to Stoughton, Stoughton to Evansville, Evansville to Brodhead, Brodhead to Monroe, and Monroe to Freeport. From Freeport we went to Rochelle, Rochelle to De Kalb, and in all these towns it rained more or less day and night. While I paid out nearly $100 on one of these trips, yet the show made plenty of money and only in one town did we miss giving two shows; and this was at De Kalb, Illinois, and there at the one show took more money than the Burr Robbins show ever took there when they exhibited twice in one day. Many a show this season has missed a half dozen or more towns which they were billed to show in, and glad to get off of some of the muddy lots and be able to miss a town and get to the next one.

Last evening I had a visit with a friend who had spent two days in Baraboo and who is a close friend of Al Ringling. He spent one evening at Mr. Ringling's home, talking over old times, and he said while Al Ringling is a very sick man, he likes to have old friends come and visit with him and is very much taken up with his new Opera House, which will be the finest of its kind in the west, and which is nearly completed. Mr. Ringling said if nothing happened, the new Opera House would be opened early in the fall, with an all star company from New York; and it was there that he was going to have hundreds of his friends come and enjoy the first show in the new play house, which for years to come will be pointed out to visitors as the one place of interest at the old home of the Ringlings.

Years ago, if you would show James A. Bailey of the Barnum show what he considered a drawing card, he was one man in the business that would pay a large salary for what he considered an attraction. The Barnum show was to show on the Lake Front for two weeks in Chicago, and Chicago happened to be the home of Billy Rice, the great minstrel for some years, where he was a great favorite. Mr. Bailey conceived the idea of engaging Billy Rice for the concert after the big show for the two weeks and sent an agent on to Chicago for that purpose.

Billy Rice at that time was at his home there on a vacation and did not care for an engagement, but Mr. Bailey urged him and said, "Billy, I'll give you $1000 for the two weeks." "And this was also probably one of the highest salaries ever paid, and the minstrel man proved the drawing card that Mr. Bailey expected.

Thousands of Chicago people stayed for the concert after the big show just to see and hear the great minstrel; and it was said that at different times during the engagement more than 3,000 people remained for the concert.

One season with the Adam Forepaugh show, we showed several of the small towns in the summer resorts in the mountains of Vermont. In these towns the only good hotels were those that catered to the summer resort people, and I well knew that they would not cater to outsiders or circus people. When I got out of the sleeper in the morning, a train had just arrived from the east and the buses were taking the people to the hotels, so I thought it would be a good scheme for me to get in the bus, go right to the hotel with the other guests; which I did and registered from Janesville, Wis. I was ushered into the breakfast room and a half hour later a dozen or fifteen of the boys working with the show came into the office; and when they went to register for breakfast, the landlord told them they could not serve them, as they did not cater to circus people. As these summer resort hotels were the only good ones in the small places, the boys did not know what to do and while they were talking in vain to the landlord, telling him they were gentlemen and willing to pay the price, I walked out of the dining room into the office and they immediately turned to the landlord and said, "There is one of our men just coming out of the dining room." "Well," said the landlord, "he came here in the bus with the rest of the guests and I did not think for a moment that he belonged to the circus and we cannot serve any more of your people for breakfast."

I complimented the landlord on his beautiful hotel, the elegant breakfast I had and tried to fix it for the rest of the boys; but he simply smiled and thanked me for the compliment, but there was nothing doing. And the other boys had to hike for the lot and get their breakfast at the cook tent, but declared that hereafter when we showed in summer resort towns that they would be on my trail early.



Barton & Bailey Circus tableau wagon. Don Carson collection.

It will be of interest here to a few people at least to know that Mr. and Mrs. John A. Barton are on the road again with a show of their own, and prospering. Mr. and Mrs. Barton were equal owners with Louella Forepaugh-Fish show which stranded here some years ago, and was sold at sheriffs sale. The Bartons have been in the business for many years and are now running a show under the name of Barton & Bailey and have been doing a good business.

The following item was received from the show a few days ago. It is truly a worthy spirit which prompts the giving of time or money for a plausible reason. A card of thanks from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd of Hot Springs, Ark., follows: "The Sisters of the Good Shepherd of Hot Springs, Ark., beg to tender their most grateful thanks to Mr. and Mrs. John A. Barton for the sum of twenty dollars and the Barton & Bailey circus, also for twenty dollars just received by money order through Mrs. John A. Barton. The money was donated to aid the Sisters' institution which is a purely benevolent one, and is struggling under difficulties of many kinds. The donation could never be more acceptable than at the present time, and the Sisters beg to assure the members of the Barton & Bailey circus that their generous gift is most highly appreciated and will be often remembered in the prayers of both children and Sisters." Signed, The Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

Envelope used by Luella Forepaugh Fish Wild West. Pfening Archives



Ed Ballard, who with C. E. Cory, control the corporation which operates the Great Hagenbeck-Wallace shows, accompanied by a landscape artist and architect, arrived at West Baden, Ind., and announced that the Hagenbeck-Wallace Company had chosen that city as the place where it would erect its big winter quarters and repair shops. The leading citizens were jubilant over the news, and a movement was promptly inaugurated to grant the big circus exemption from taxation for ten years. It is also planned by the people of the valley to raise a fund by subscription and with the same to build one of the new buildings.

Mr. Ballard is easily the most popular man in these parts, and the people feel that inasmuch as he turned down many alluring and attractive offers from other municipalities that it is up to them to reimburse him. West Baden feels highly complimented. Every citizen concedes that Mr. Ballard has treated the town handsomely and deserves handsome treatment in return. The groom's animal men, keepers, trainers and mechanics in the repair shops that will be carried through the winter will easily number a hundred and the population of the town will be permanently increased to that extent.

Besides that, the shows will rehearse and open there

annually, and that means that the whole five hundred employees will be there each spring for periods ranging from two to four weeks each. The money paid out in salaries will amount to huge sums and merchants and hotel men will benefit vastly.

The winter quarters, furthermore, will be a district acquisition as a show place and will be an added interest for the guests of the big hotels. It is planned to erect very beautiful buildings and to park the land all about them and make the site as attractive as artistry and ingenuity can. Mr. Ballard's handsome home will not be greatly distant from the location chosen. This mansion, the most spacious and beautiful in the valley, has also lent much class to the great American spa.

July 31, 1915

Did you ever see Father Time face to face and have him take you back over the road which he has traveled for almost a century, giving you pen pictures of his life as he went along? If you have not, then I certainly have beat you to it. It was on Thursday of last week, when passing the interurban station on Main Street, that I noticed a man of this description; and he made such an impression on me that I could not pass him up. So I ventured to say, "Uncle, I suppose you are waiting for the interurban car?"

"No sir," he said in a strong, heavy voice, "I am waiting for my daughter."

I said, "Do you live in this part of the country?"

And the old man said, "No, not for many years. I left this country fifty years ago this summer with my family and moved to Topeka, Kansas, where I have lived ever since. In 1865, I owned a farm about eight miles west of here in the town of Center, where I had lived for seven or eight years."

"And I suppose that you came from the east when you came to Wisconsin originally?"

"Well, my friend," said the old man, "if you are looking for the history of my life, I think we had better find a comfortable place to sit down, and I will take you back to my father's home on the farm in New York state, where I was born, and bring you along up to the time that we settled in the town of Center some three or four miles from Footville.

"My father owned a farm near a small town called Bolivar, in Allegheny County, New York. My father was in comfortable circumstances and always had a number of fine horses on the farm. When a boy of not more than nine or ten years old, I would often go into the pasture after the horses in the evening, and the first one I could get hold of, I would mount him and many times stood straight up on his back, while they would run to the barnyard. When I was fourteen or fifteen years of age, Dan Rice heard of me and



Newspaper ad used by the Sells-Floto-Buffalo Bill Wild West in 1915. Pfening Archives.

came to see my father about my traveling with his show, which was the only one of the kind at that time on the road. Father finally consented to my going with the Rice show, telling Mr. Rice if he would look after me personally, as though I was his own son, he would not object.

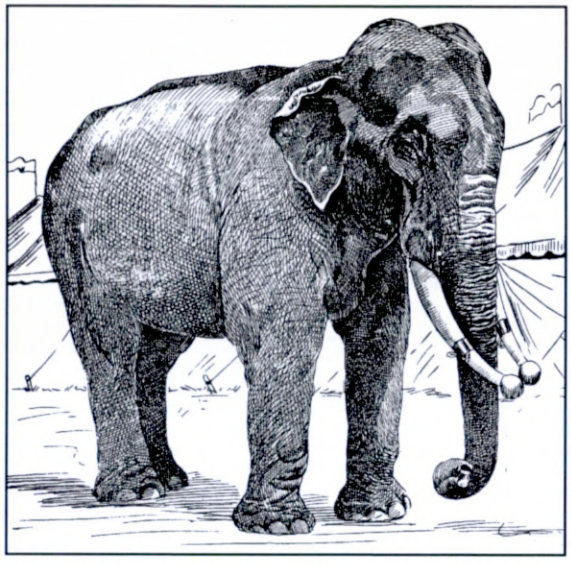
"It was then early in the spring, some weeks before time to take the road, but I accompanied Mr. Rice to his winter quarters where I went in to practice for the summer's campaign. I was not only a good rider for those days, but also a good leaper and tumbler, and when the show finally took the road, I was billed as one of the features. In fact, Dan Rice, the old white horse and myself were about all that there was to the riding performance of the Dan Rice show.

"I stayed with Mr. Rice for five years, saved all my money and as I was then nearly twenty-one years of age and had my girl picked out, I thought the only thing for me to do was to quit the circus business, get married and come west. This I did and came overland with my new wife and bought a farm on the south side in Chicago, but part of this farm was swampy and after a time, we were taken with the ague and chills, and for a time it took about all our spare change to buy whiskey and quinine for the ague, which at that time seemed to be about the only cure. A few years later I sold the farm in Chicago and moved overland to the town of Center. This I think was in about '46 or '47.

"We remained on this farm until the Civil War broke out, and then I enlisted in the Third Wisconsin Cavalry and served until the close of the war. Many times during my service in the war I had heard stories about the far west, and in the fall of '65, I sold my farm in the town of Center and made another overland trip to Topeka, Kansas, where I have resided ever since. And last spring, I told my daughter, who lives with me, that I wanted to take one more trip back east, put in a day at Janesville and later go on to Chicago and take another look at the old farm, which they tell me is now selling as high as one thousand dollars a front foot. But Janesville looks all wrong to me. The new depots, new buildings, new

bridges, in fact the only thing that looked natural to me was the river.

"On my arrival here, I asked for a few old friends, the late J. M. Bostwick, M. C. Smith, J. B. Doe and a few others, but they shook their heads and said they were all gone. But I don't know of four nicer corners in any town the size of Janesville than these four here, where we are sitting. I took a look at the new First National Bank building for that was where I went many times to do business with my old friend, J. B. Doe. My name," he said, "is Edwin R. Partridge, and I will be 93 years old next September."



I then told the old man that I, too, had been in the show business for some years and that in 1889, for two weeks in Boston, his old employer, Dan Rice, who at that time was down and out, was my guest. He immediately wanted to know how much I knew about the show business, and if we ever showed in Topeka, Kansas in my time. When I told him that I had showed there many times, he asked me if there was any one there in the show business that I knew.

"Yes," I said, "Adam Sells of the famous Sells Brothers circus was my particular friend, and I was always his guest when we showed in Topeka."

"Dear me," said he, "Adam Sells has been my close friend for forty years. You know, Mr. Sells was one of the wealthy men of Topeka and owned two of the finest hotels in the city, and it was many times that I was his guest up to the time of his death, a few years ago."

And when the old man bade me good-bye, he said the visit he had had with me was one of the best he had had since he was in the business.

"If you happen to say anything about me in the newspaper, will you please send me a copy, for do you know,' he said, "it has been more than seventy years since the name of Edwin R. Partridge has been mentioned in the newspaper."

And in a few minutes his daughter arrived and they were soon on their way to Chicago. And this the old man said was his farewell visit to this part of the country.

Some two weeks ago, at her home in Racine, Wisconsin, death came and relieved the sufferings of Mrs. Daniel Castello, who for many years was well known by circus people all over the country, who will mourn her loss, for she was a bright, shining light in the business and beloved of all who knew her. After her marriage, she traveled with her husband's shows. At one time, the Castellos were part owners of the the Barnum circus. She is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Katherine Dearholt of Milwaukee, and one son, Harry G. Castello, Racine.

August 7, 1915

On Saturday and Sunday, July 24 and 25, Chicago, with arms extended, greeted a new friend in the circus world. This was the Sells-Floto Circus and Buffalo Bill Wild West. And while Buffalo Bill has been a great favorite for years in Chicago, the balance of the show was all new to Chicago. They showed at the White City grounds on the south side, and were greeted at four performances with a big business. The show made an impression that will surely warrant them to put Chicago on the route card whenever they come East. The Sells-Floto and Buffalo Bill Shows in the business is known as the Rocky Mountain show, for its owners as well as its winter quarters are in Denver, Colorado. It is owned by Tammen and Bonfils, H. H. Tammen being a millionaire newspaper man of Denver, and its manager, Fred Hutchinson, is a nephew of the late James A. Bailey of the Barnum show, and was educated in the business for some years under Mr. Bailey.

Speaking of shows and show business, Beloit this season has had two street carnivals, the Hagenbeck-Wallace, and on the 17th of this month they have the Barnum & Bailey show; while Janesville has had but two shows in five years. We would naturally ask the question: "Is there a reason?"

Maybe. In the first place, Beloit is ever ready to hand any big show a lot, the license, and the water free. And it is not only Beloit but hundreds of other towns in the country that are anxious to have something going on in the town are doing the same. A year ago, while in the main office of the Ringling and the Barnum shows in Chicago, Mr. Williams, the general agent at the headquarters, showed me a stack of letters from all over the country making them the same offer. And this during the season rounds into many thousands of dollars and is something of an object to the owners, especially in the wet, bad season like this, where they are trying to cut expenses on every corner.

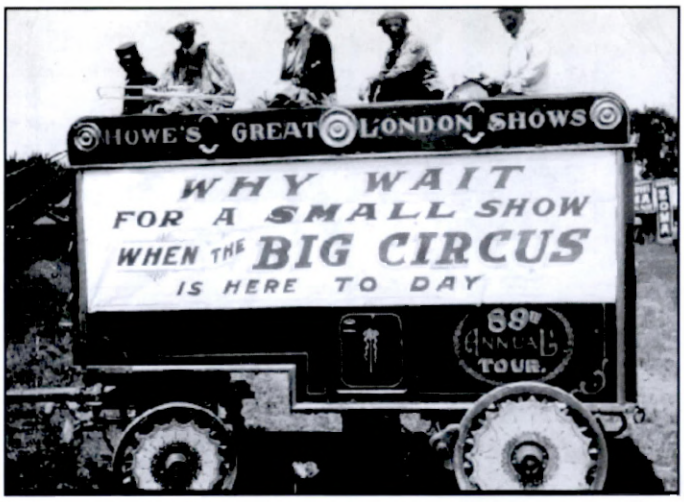
For some years with the Adam Forepaugh show, aside from my duty in the ticket wagon, I also acted as claim agent, and many times had to leave the show for a day or two and go back to try and make a settlement for different claims, and many of them unjust ones. One day one of the big center poles fell and struck a young man, some twenty-three or four years old, knocking him down and cutting his head. It was impossible to settle with him at the time, and two or three days, after the show in the evening, Adam Forepaugh and his nephew, John A. Forepaugh, who was the manager, decided that I had better go back and try and make a settlement. The young man was only injured at the time; and while it was a claim that should have been settled in a few days, it cost several hundred to go back the following winter and take witnesses from Philadelphia,

and might have cost thousands before it was over. Mr. Forepaugh and his nephew were in the ticket wagon giving me instructions and telling me what such a claim ought to be settled for. And after they had given me several rolls of advice, I said to them, "It seems to me as though one of you men, you seem to know so much about it, had better go back and look after this yourself. For you know, as well as I do that in settlements of this kind you have got to pay more money and be much broader in these settlements than your rights."

But I made the trip and got a settlement, which cost about $300, and while $275 of this was a hold-up, it was better than a long drawn outlaw suit, even if the young man had only got five dollars damages. And so it is with all those big traveling shows, they must stand for a hold-up once in a while.

The management of Howes' Great London Shows certainly has a big heart. This was demonstrated when the show was in Michigan City, Indiana, when, after the close of the performance on the lot, the entire show marched to the Indiana State Prison and gave an exhibition before the 1300 inmates. The performers never worked before a better audience it is said, each act being greeted with cheers and great applause. The prisoners almost went wild over the clowns. It had been some time since the inmates saw a circus performance and, needless to say, it was one real treat for them. This was the first time a circus ever exhibited inside the walls of the Indiana State Prison.

"They went into the ark two by two, the elephant and the kangaroo." And wasn't it a glorious thing that they did? We do not believe that the time ever comes in the life of a man or woman, no matter how many years they may live, that their blood does not run just a little quicker when they hear the circus band and watch the circus parade. But if there does exist the mortal who has become so stale, so surfeited with life that no enjoyment is derived from circus day, that person is to be pitied.



A Howes Great London tableau wagon decorated with sign in opposition to the Sparks show. Pfening Archives.

Men and women are only children, larger grown, and, with their larger growth, too many assume the attitude of having seen all there is to see that is worth while; and can evince no pleasurable emotions for fear that it will not comfort with their dignity. They can find no pleasure, they would have people think, in watching the antics of the monkeys in their cages, those little Simians who are so man-like many times as to remind one of a little, dried up, shriveled old man. They have no thrills in watching the "big cats," the lions and the leopards, and imagining what they could do to people if they were loosed from their cages. They find no enjoyment in feeding peanuts to the elephant and watching him curl his big trunk into his mouth, his beady eyes glistening with joy the while. They excuse themselves for going by the old and timeworn excuse that they had to bring the children. But there are also very many others who frankly enjoy going to the circus just as much as they did forty or fifty or sixty years ago, when they were first on the circus lot in the morning, helping the cook start a fire or carrying water for the animals, and did not leave until the last wagon was loaded and on its way to the next town. These have remembrances of other circus days, the good times they had, the things that happened then that come back to them flood tide and give to the worn and frayed trappings, the mangy lions, the tired performer, all the grandeur, all the fierceness, all the wonderfulness that they had on that first circus day so many years ago.

August 14, 1915

On Tuesday evening, I met an old friend in the office of the hotel and we were soon settled in easy chairs and commenced making something of a review of the pacers and trotters of some years past. This man was Charles Dean of Palatine, Illinois, where he owns his own home and stock farm, and this is where he has prepared many of his fast steeds that have become famous the world over. For Charlie Dean, as he is familiarly known by his friends, has driven many horses to world's records. And seven years ago this summer I was fortunate enough to be one of the judges at the state fair when he drove his fast pacer, "Minor Heir" to his record of 1:59-1/2.

"I have got all the score cards of that meeting, for the entire week," I told Mr. Dean, "put away in an envelope and tomorrow morning I will bring them down and give them to you. I placed them away with other similar relics of gone by circus days, letters, telegrams, and at least one cablegram, sent me years ago from London."

And when I brought them out from their hiding places the next morning, I looked them all over, and the only letter or telegram that I had laid away so carefully that the sender was still living, was one from W. F. Cody, Buffalo Bill. There were letters and telegrams there from P. T. Barnum, James A. Bailey, and James E. Cooper, James Hutchinson, Adam Sells, Joseph T. McCaddon, Billie Burke and many others, some of which I had laid away thirty-five years ago. If my talk to you this week of the circus should prove less interesting than some of the former ones, I shall have to beg your indulgence, for my head this week has been so full of the trotters and pacers that I could scarcely hear the band playing for the grand entry.

Yesterday an old friend of mine dropped into town, by the name of W. F. Gardner, but for fear the boys would not recognize the "W. F.," I will call him "Doc" Gardner, which he was named many years ago when he first started out in the circus business. "Doc" Gardner has always been a high class man and for years has traveled with the best shows in the country as an advance man, well capable of filling any position in advance. "Doc" commenced in the business many years ago when quite a young man with the W. W. Cole show, where he remained some three years, and after that show was taken over by the Barnum people, "Doc" also went to the Barnum show where he was an advance man of that show for some years, not only in this country but in Europe. After the return of the Barnum show to this country, and the great show fell into the hands of the Ringlings, Gardner also followed the show to the Ringlings, where he was connected with the advance for seven years. And after a careful rehearsal of his ups and downs with these different shows, the greatest in the country, "Doc" simply told me that he was still with a headliner, but like thousands of others, it was a picture show, but the greatest on earth. He is now the advance agent of the greatest of all shows in this line, "The Birth of a Nation."

"Doc" Gardner was raised in West Union, Iowa, where his widowed mother still lives and where he makes his home when not on the road. And while "Doc" has not gained the fame and fortune of the Barnum, Forepaugh or the Ringlings, he has always held high class responsible positions and gathered his posies by the roadside as he went along, for everyday is sunshine to "Doc."

The Fair Association this week were fortunate in selecting the high class acts which have done so much to entertain the people during the week. Dainty Viola Galarmo and her associates on the Ferris Wheel and their different poses and statuary certainly is high class and seldom that you can get a company as high class as this all the way through for a fair attraction at this time of the year. These people have for some years back been one of the features of such shows as Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sells Floto and Buffalo Bill and other high class shows. The Bell Thazer Brothers appear in an extremely neat hand balancing act. Handsomely costumed, their bare shoulders showing superb muscular development, they execute difficult hand to hand balancing with consummate ease and grace, including with a dive across the stage by one of the brothers onto the outstretched hands of the other, who receives his weight with the firmness of rock.

A letter received from the Barton and Bailey show tells the news of their closing for the season in Montana. Colonel William R. Hall closed the show at Missoula, Mont., and shipped it back to Lancaster, Mo., where it opened the season. En route between Stanberry and Maryville, Mo., the train ran into a washout, breaking the train in two. Half of it was pulled back to Stanberry and the other half went to Maryville. After fourteen hours, the water receded, the track was repaired and the two parts of the train were joined and proceeded to Lancaster. The stock was all taken off and watered here. Hugo Brothers' Circus en route from Mound City to Tarklo, Mo., passed over three miles of track two feet under water. En route from Tarklo to Maryville, the show had to detour one hundred and ten miles around a washout on the C.B.& Q. coming in on the Wabash. The parade was given at 3 o'clock and the matinee started at 4 o'clock.

All of the lowlands in this territory are flooded and the railroad track is in a terrible condition. And that all the big shows and circuses this season are having their own troubles with the flood. The following letter from the Hagenbeck and Wallace outfit tells the story. They have even had to line up their trains and are now running in three sections instead of two in order to get over some of the bad washouts in the railroad. "Late arrival and long haul to the lot; parade at noon; doors opened at 1:30, good afternoon, but rain prevented the evening crowd from coming. However, a fair size audience braved the wet to witness the show. The new coach arrived here. This completes our Flying Squadron and from now on we move in three sections daily."

August 21, 1915

"The Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show On Earth;" and while this sounds big, those who were fortunate enough to witness the show in Beloit last Tuesday will agree with me when I say it surely made good and that they still keep the quality up. And the minute I walked onto the show grounds, everything in the big show carried me back many years. For although the Ringling Brothers have owned and managed the show for many years, there was not a Ringling to be seen; and many faces that were familiar to me and have been for years were in the ticket wagon at the front door, in fact, more or less of what might be termed old-timers were still to be seen all over the show.

The first one to greet me was Charles Hutchinson, who always wears a smile and always had a kind word for his friends. Charlie is the



Letterhead used by the Siegrist and Sibon show. Pfening Archives.

ticket agent and treasurer, and for many years has been connected with the management of the show, and was educated in the business by his uncle, James A. Bailey, whose name the show still bears. And there is always a place around a great show like this for such a man as Charlie Hutchinson, and will be as long as stakes are driven and canvas raised.



Charles Hutchinson, circus office man. Pfening Archives.

The next one to greet me was Jay Rial, the genial press agent who has filled his responsible position with the show for many years. Jay had many questions to ask me about what I was doing and if I still made Janesville my home and if I did not feel at times as though I should again be back in the business. "For," said he, "you are one of the few who were prominent in the business some years ago that quietly dropped away" and retired." Jay Rial well knew that my eyesight was bad, so he gave us seats in the front row as close to the performance as it was possible to get, and true to his calling, he smilingly said, "I want you and your party to see it all for we are making good. It is the greatest show on earth." Before we reached our seats in the big tent, we were greeted several times by a few old timers, less prominent in the business, but the kind that I am always glad to meet. We had scarcely got located and ready for the grand entry to appear, when Eddie Silbon of the Siegrist and Silbon Aerial Artists greeted us and said, "Wait a minute until I go and get Toto Siegrist. For, don't you know, hundreds of times we have talked over the old days of the Forepaugh show and the many good times that we have had on long Sunday runs, and the fried chicken lunches we used to enjoy in your state room." Siegrist was soon there, and we visited until the bell tapped for the grand entry in which they had to take part, and the visit was only cut too short

The Siegrist & Silbon companies were brought over from England by Adam Forepaugh in 1882. The Siegrist high class acrobatic act and the Silbons, seven in number, four men and three women, did the high aerial act in the top of the great tent where they turned double somersaults from one side of the canvas to the other. Eddie Silbon at that time was a small boy, wearing knee pants. Today he is a man forty-eight years of age, and the only one of the great Silbon family still living. But the Siegrist and Silbon act is still as high class as ever, and Toto Siegrist, the one who turns the double somersaults afternoon and evening is a man past fifty years of age, and he says his work is as easy as it ever was and that he never worked surer, seldom missing the catch from the other side of the canvas.

After the show was over, I was taken back into the dressing room and introduced to many high class people in the business who were strangers to me, one being Fred Bradna, the equestrian director who a few years ago came from Strassburg, Alsace, Lorraine where his father and mother and one sister still live and which, as many of you know, lies in the war zone, near where much of the hard fighting is still going on. And I only had to watch the show for a few minutes to know that the equestrian director was a high class man, for the show was running like clock work without a second being lost. A high class equestrian director with one of the big shows is an important factor, for it is their business to see that the show goes with a hurrah, and is all out and over on time.

The Siegrist and Silbon aerial act is the last act before the hippodrome commences, and their daring acts high in midair never fails to send the people away from the great show with a thrill.

One of the new features with the show is the nine elephants playing baseball. This act alone simply sets the people wild. The umpire with his mask and chest protector on, standing well up to the battery, and watching every move that was made, and after they had played for a few minutes the umpire called down the pitcher. The pitcher laid the ball down on the plate, and walking over to the catcher whispered a few things in his car, and walked back and picked up his ball. When the umpire thought he discovered that the pitcher and the catcher was putting up a job on him, he ordered the pitcher to retire and called in a new man, when the game went on. When the elephant team ball game was over and the band commenced to play for a new act, hundreds of voices were heard all over the canvas saying, "Play ball! Play ball!"

Another new feature was a large black grizzly bear who road a bicycle on the platform as few men could ride one, and when this was over, they put four roller skates on him, and he did an act on them that would have done credit to a professional.

But the great show had so many new features, and high class ones, that to mention all of them would take too much space, but the general verdict of the crowd was that they had made good their claim of the greatest show on earth.

For many years back the greatest circus press agent in the business was a man by the name of Tody Hamilton. For many years he was connected with the Barnum & Bailey show, and if anything new and wonderful appeared in the columns of the newspaper in connection with the great show, it was always credited to Tody Hamilton. And now he bobs up serenely again with an entirely new story of his great umbrella which is being erected at Luna Park. The following letter tells the story of Tody's

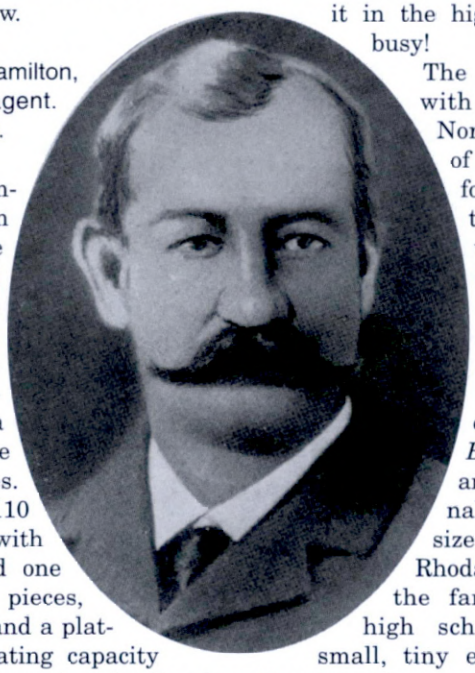
new adventure: "Tody Hamilton, the only man who ever lost an elephant in Manhattan and would not be comforted, says, and if Tody Hamilton (who once lost two lions and a tiger near Forty-Second Street and Broadway) says a thing is true, then it's true whether it's true or not--Tody Hamilton says that Luna Park is about to raise an umbrella which no living man can borrow, let alone steal. The umbrella will cover an acre of Luna Park ground, so it was said by Tody Hamilton, who for years saw to it that a baby giraffe was born annually in Madison Square Garden on the night the Barnum & Bailey came to town. First of all, a steel umbrella handle will be constructed in Luna and the handle will be 140 feet high, so it was said by Tody Hamilton--who was the first man to reveal the news that Slivers, the clown, was the first man to strike gold in Alaska.

"The umbrella will be steel-ribbed, covered with circus tent canvas and will be raised and lowered by machinery, according to a statement issued by Tody Hamilton, who once crossed hoop snakes with puff adders while with the Barnum show and raised thereby a crop of living automobile tires. Five thousand persons will be able to enjoy the cool shade under the umbrella.

"A searchlight with rays shooting for ten miles, an intermittent flash beacon, thousands of electric bulbs and things and stuff to taste will decorate the steel and canvas umbrella at night, the completed umbrella to cost $25,000, according to Tody Hamilton, who added that he had just turned down an offer made by Colonel Roosevelt to stock the Luna lagoon with a correspondence school of man-eating fish."

August 28, 1915

Have I seen a circus this week? Well, I should say I had. A few days ago I met Walter Gollmar, of the Gollmar show, and during our talk of shows and show people, Walter said, "Dave, next Tuesday the Sparks show will exhibit in Brodhead, and as that is only twenty miles away. I want you to go and see it. Charles Sparks, the manager, is a personal friend of mine, and you tell him that I sent you and there will be nothing around the show too good for you." So on Tuesday morning I went to Bredhead to visit a show that I had never seen and known but little about, and found it to be much more of a show than I expected to find. After a few minutes visit with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sparks, I was turned over to the press agent, Fletcher Smith, who, by the way, is more than an ordinary writer on circuses and circus people, and has furnished many interesting articles for the *New York Clipper* and *Billboard*, both of which are representative papers and authorities on circuses and circus people. Mr. Smith took me in the front door to the dressing room, through the sideshows, horse tents, and, cook tents and a better equipped show from one end to the other, I never saw.



R. E. "Tody" Hamilton, circus press agent. Pfening Archives.

The show consists of fourteen cars, three sleepers and one advance car; fourteen cages of animals, five elephants, and a dozen or more riding horses. They put up a 110 foot round top, with two 14-foot and one 50-foot middle pieces, with two rings and a platform, and a seating capacity for about 3,000 people. The Sparks show, like many others, has gradually grown from year to year, from a small beginning, and for some six years has made its winter quarters in the South. The show makes a fine parade on the streets. They have sixty-five head of fine heavy horses, all in good condition. And [it] certainly looked to me [that] under the careful management of Charles Sparks and assistant manager Charles Fredericks, it would keep on growing until it would have to be numbered among the big ones. Mr. Sparks told me that the South was not a desirable place to winter, and that he was keeping his eye open for some town in this part of the country, where he could find temporary winter quarters with a view of later purchasing ground and building a permanent home for the show. And why would it not be a business proposition for Janesville to send a man to the show to talk over the advisability with Mr. Sparks settling here. This is near Chicago, where much of his business would be done; our railroad facilities are the best; and if he could be induced to come here, it would certainly be quite a benefit to the town and surrounding country in more ways than one. The Sparks show has always run high class, always been free from grafters of all kinds, and in every town that they have been able to show in, the newspapers speak of it in the highest terms. Get busy!

The principal rider with the show is Norman Orton, son of Miles Orton, who for some years was the principal rider with the Burr Robbins show and who has many friends in Janes-ville.

On the front cover of the *Billboard*, a circus and theatrical journal, appears a life size portrait of Mrs. Rhoda Royal, wife of the famous trainer of high school horses and small, tiny elephants. Rhoda Royal is the equestrian director of the Sells-Floto and Buffalo Bill shows, and his wife, an able assistant, is seen every day in the ring, either riding or driving the different high school horses, which are the feature of the show. Rhoda Royal and I have been close friends for more than thirty years, and no man in the business has advanced faster than Mr. Royal. And it is fair to say that more than seventy-five percent of the high school horses with the various shows derived their education from Mr. Royal. He has six tiny elephants, the most of which are working in the

vaudeville circuits. And the smallest one of all, who insists on talking or making a noise a good deal of the time, he has named Billy Sunday, after the famous evangelist. Rhoda says that while Tiny does not speak as plain as Billy Sunday, yet he is just as busy and takes just as much interest in his business.

Some three weeks ago I met one of the advance agents of one of the big shows, and in talking of the season and the condition of the country, I found that at about that time, and possibly a few days later, there were six of the best circuses in the country in the state of Wisconsin. And as these men are the best posted on conditions all over the country, would this not look as though we were living in a country as good as the best? For Wisconsin this year will be showed from the smallest hamlet to the largest cities as it never was before. And this would certainly show that the state in general is [as] prosperous as any. This man said that in Wisconsin people always seem to have a little change in their inside pocket for the circus.



Sparks Circus newspaper ad used in 1915. Pfening Archives.

An odd wedding took place at Lima, Ohio, August 12, when the marriage of Charles T. (Buck) Beghart to Miss Odille Osborne--both of whom were formerly with the 101 Ranch Wild West show, and at present Miss Julia Allen's Wild West show with Rutherford Greater Shows--was solemnized. The bride, bridegroom, Justice of the Peace, Miss Julia Allen, proprietor of the Allen show, who acted as bridesmaid, and Clifford Allen, Miss Allen's brother, who played the part of best man, were all mounted on horses, the bride being seated on Teddy, Miss Allen's dancing bronco. The ceremony was performed at 9:30 p.m. in front of the driving tent, which was elaborately decorated, with all the members of the Wild West show present. Prof. Marrazini's band furnished the music.

Following the. ceremony, a wedding supper was given at which forty guests were present, including F. J. Ward, member of the committee representing the Moose Lodge of Lima; Patrolman Frank Eberle, representing Mayor Standish of Lima, who was unable to attend, and Irv. J. Polack, manager of the Rutherford Greater Shows, and wife. It was planned to make the wedding a public affair in the arena of the wild west show, but rain interfered.

According to the *New York Herald*, the German Kaiser and his staff studied the Barnum & Bailey Circus closely during its tour of the German and subsequently adopted practically every feature of its wonderful organization for transporting, housing, and feeding a large body of men and hundreds of draft horses. Theodore Bauer and George Bowles, who were with the show at that time, are quoted as having personally conducted German officers over to study the cook house and other methods. The Kaiser frequently attended and displayed the keenest interest in the commissary and transportation departments, and plied the late James A. Bailey with numerous questions and seemed chiefly interested in the fact that the equipment of the entire sixty-seven car show could be detrained, transported to the lot, and readied for business in three hours, including the lighting system, horse shoeing and wagon repair departments, and above all was he interested in the cook house, which system he has since adopted in its entirety.

September 4, 1915

For some years back, two of the most prominent men in the circus business have been sworn enemies and not on speaking terms. These men are John Ringling of the Ringling and the Barnum show and H. H. Tammen of the Sells-Floto Buffalo Bill show. Unknown to each other, these men were both guests at one of the principal hotels in Kansas City. One evening while in the lobby of the hotel, these men suddenly came face to face. The meeting was so quick and unexpected that they both commenced talking at the same time, and it was not so long until they were seated in easy chairs and talking the business over for some years back. And it was at this sudden meeting of the two famous men in the business that soon patched up their differences and made them friends once more. And [if it were not] for this sudden meeting, their supposed grievances might have gone on for years.

Back in the wagon show days there was a young German clown by the name of Adolph Zeno. And while Zeno was a clown, he was a quiet matter-of-fact kind of a young man, and took everything that was told him by anyone around the show as a matter of fact. Along toward the close of the season, the other performers in the dressing room thought they would have a little fun with Zeno, and kept telling him that they did not think the show had much money

and it was a question whether they would be able to pay everybody off when the show closed. They told Zeno that in this country they always paid the performers off alphabetically, commencing with the A's and going down. This left Zeno the last one to be paid, so that he did not put in an appearance at the ticket wagon until everybody else had their money, and was little surprised to think that he was not paid in full. Zeno returned to the same show in the spring, and when he was asked to sign a contract for the season, he notified the show that he had changed his name from Zeno to Ajax. He said, "My name is now Adolph Ajax." So in the fall when the show closed there was no question as to who, would be the first man paid off.

The most hazardous business of circus is that of a lion tamer, or the trainer of cat animals as it is known in the business. These men seldom live to die of natural causes. And even the elephant trainers often meet their death in their work; for it is many times after years in the business that they get careless and at an unexpected moment they receive a death blow from the trunk of one of the ponderous beasts that has never been suspected of being dangerous. A short time ago at Northfield, Minn., while the Great Patterson shows were exhibiting there, Frank Lewis, better known in the business as Major Dumond, met his death in an iron cage where he was working a cage of lions. The following letter from Northfield tells the dreadful story: "The members of the Great Patterson shows, together with every citizen of the city of Northfield, are stunned by the blow that has fallen upon them. On August 20, at 9:30 o'clock, before an audience of over 1,000 people, who had just applauded him as the band played his salute, Frank Lewis, known to the world as Major Dumond, the Lion King, was literally torn to pieces by the five brutes that heretofore had answered his every word of command. Promptly at 9:30 o'clock Major made his bow and stepped into the iron-bound arena. He immediately opened the cages and his tawny pets came tumbling into the ring. The first four came out as usual, when, following his custom, Romeo, the star cat, jumped from the cage door to the pedestal he mounts in the first part of the act. The pedestal was not level or the lion did not hit it squarely; anyway, it toppled over and the enraged brute, falling beside the Major, immediately sunk his teeth into the Major's thigh. An artery was severed and the other lions, smelling the fresh blood, all attacked the unfortunate man.



The wild animal circus on the Great Patterson carnival. Pfening Archives.

"It was a terrible scene. Strong men moaned and wrung their hands in helpless despair. Women shrieked wildly and fainted. Joe Sarcastan had just unchained the elephants, which follow the lion act; and leaving them in charge of his assistant, armed with a bull hook and pitchfork, he rushed into the big top, where with Major's assistants, a valiant fight was made to save Dumond, but the infuriated beasts could not be driven from their prey.

"Manager James Patterson killed Romeo and Denver with a heavy army revolver and the fusillade from another revolver in the hands of John T. Backman, seconded by continuous fire from 22-caliber Winchesters taken from a shooting gallery close by, by John Renfro and Charles Patterson, finished the work of rescue; and with two lions dead, the others, badly wounded, were forced into their cages. The splendid presence of mind of each and every attache prevented accidents during the dismissing of the big panic-stricken audience.

"Not once throughout the hideous tragic struggle did Dumond give way to excitement or lose his head. He fought coolly and gamely against the big beasts, and several times he almost slipped away from [them]. Finally, with his body ripped almost to shreds, Dumond went down under the beasts, which were in a frenzy of blood lust.

"When rescued, the Major was hurriedly placed on an improvised stretcher and in the Patterson car was rushed to the Northfield Hospital, where doctors Seley and Babcock, with a corps of able nurses, used every means in their power to save his life, but without avail. Frank Lewis passed into the Great Beyond at 3:26 a.m., having lived just five hours. He was horribly mutilated and the doctors stated that death was due to loss of blood, although a saline solution was injected into his veins, by the quart.

"One of the peculiar incidents that so often occurs just prior to a tragedy of this kind happened just before the evening show. A little dog, an especial favorite with the Major, was run over by an automobile and killed. The Major, holding his pet in his arms, remarked to his wife, 'That's the way

I'm going.' When asked what he meant, he replied, "'The lions will get me some time and I will go quick like little Trooper just went."

"Major Dumond, as he was known to the amusement world and public, was born in Buffalo, N. Y., in 1897. He leaves, in addition to a million friends, a widow, sister, father and mother, who reside in Nabbs, Ind.

"All shows were closed all day out of respect to the dead, and funeral service was held at 6 o'clock in the Lee Undertaking Chapel, where the Major's remains laid in state. Two hundred and fifty employees of the Great Patterson shows were there, with hundreds of Northfield citizens. The casket and all available space around it was a bower of flowers. Dozens of floral offerings from individual members of this company, offering from each separate show, and a big blanket of lilies of the valley from the entire company, was in evidence. A beautiful piece from the Northfield Commercial Club, one from the city authorities, one from the committee under whom the show is playing, together with many offerings from citizens of Northfield, made up a veritable wall of flowers. Throughout the day, many telegrams were received from friends of the
Major all over the country; and these, together with the floral offerings, will be taken by his wife with the remains to the old home in Indiana. The services were conducted by Rev. J. W. Stebbins of Northfield, who made all his everlasting friends with his beautiful sentiments and touching tributes.

"Frank Lewis had been in the employ of the Great Patterson shows as a trainer of cat animals for eight years. He was fearless to a fault, and loved his work and mastery over the jungle-bred monsters. He was loved by all, as he was a man's man. The writer has known him for a good many years, and during a long period of close association, fraught with the ups and downs of the show business, never knew him to complain or speak ill of anyone. His habits throughout his life were most exemplary. His tragic and untimely death was a catastrophe. He will long be mourned."



Billy Burke as featured on a Barnum & London lithograph. Pfening Archives.

September 11, 1915

Did you ever stop to think of the way that you should go to a circus to get the most good out of it? Well, I am going to tell you. And I got my cue for this at the Barnum & Bailey show a few weeks ago in Beloit. While talking to a friend in the menagerie, two families, each having three or four children, were nearby. And a little girl that seemed to be some seven or eight years old and very interested in the cage animals, asked her mother a question about them, which seemed to the parent to be very funny; and instead of explaining to the child something about the animals, which she should have done, she turned to her friends and told them the question the child had asked, and they all had a good laugh at the child's expense, the child hiding her face in shame and from that time on seemed to be afraid to ask any more questions.

Now, where is there a better school of instruction for children than any one of the menageries of the big shows? If that mother had answered the child as she should, [she would have] explained to her what the animals were, and the countries that they came from, how they were captured in their wild state. And if there was anything that the mother could not have answered intelligently herself, she should have asked the keepers, who are always glad to answer any questions as to the annals and their habits in their wild state. If parents with children would be at the show promptly at one o'clock and spend the entire one hour before the performance commences in showing the children through and giving them all the information they could gather, it would be an education and never would be forgotten. For in one of those big menageries there are animals from every country in the world, and they always take it as a compliment to be asked questions and are ever ready to answer any. Keep this in mind when you go to the next big show, and see that you give all the information possible, both for your own good and that of the children.

One of the most interesting articles that I have ever read was sent to me last week, and it was written for the *Theatre*, which is a theatrical journal published in New York, and was written by Townsend Walsh, the highest class writer of circuses and theatricals in this country. And what makes the article of more than ordinary interest to me is the fact that every person mentioned in the article were personal friends of mine back in the '80's, among them being Madame Dockrill, the great English rider; Tom Barry, the clown; Daisy Belmont, the great bareback rider. And by the way, I made out the first contract that Daisy Belmont signed as a rider in the business. And when I said to her, "What show have you been with and where did you learn to ride? I don't

think," said I, "I have heard of you before."

Daisy was then sixteen years old and had never traveled with a show before, but simply said, "You know, Mr. Watt, people say that Billie Burke never had to study or practice for his work, for he was a natural clown in the circus or on the street, and I guess my riding is the same way. I was naturally a rider and have only practiced practically the entire winter past."

Billy Burke, the popular star, is the daughter of a clown who was popular in his day. The actress, as is well known, at the beginning of her stage career discarded her baptismal name of Ethel and decided to perpetuate her father's name by adopting his euphonious nom de cirque.

Burke was the favorite jester of the sawdust arena in the '80's. Circus day was a red letter day to the youngsters when Billy Burke happened to be the clown. What a thrill of delight and excitement the children of the day experienced when Billie bounded into the ring, in all the glory of the motley and proceeded to unload his cargo of witticisms and drolleries. Circus day in the '80's was a tame event to the children who an. anticipated his appearance and found him missing on the occasion.

"Now, Mr. Burke, what have you got to say for yourself today?" the ringmaster would ask with an assumed air of indifference, as he swept the magic air with his whip. Whereupon Biffie would pour forth a volley of mystifying conundrums, the solution of each bringing ridicule upon Mr. Ringmaster. I have forgotten the name of the dignitary who served as the best foil to Billie in these contests of wit. Was it the debonair Mr. Den W. Stone, or the polished Mr. William Castle, or the affable and portly Mr. Sid J. Euson? It really does not matter much, as Billie Burke alone was the magnet of attraction. His assumed air of deference to the ringmaster and his slyness in "taking a rise" out of him, his injured innocence when caught with the penny whistle concealed in his capacious pockets, his gusto in singing the regulation "clown song," which constitutes one of the performance, his condescension in holding up



Clown Frank "Slivers" Oakley. Pfening Archives.

the paper hoops and banners while assisting at the graceful equestrienne acts of Mme. Dockrill and Miss Daisy Belmont, his undisguised admiration for those charming ladies, expressed in eloquent pantomime [that which] had to be seen to be appreciated.

I never had the privilege of meeting Billy Burke in proporia persona and without his make-up, but I have heard that he was the same genial, jolly fellow that he appeared to be in the ring. Unlike Sir James Matthew Barrie's clown--the clown in "Pantaloon," who is a venomous, malignant little "Joey" in spite of his comicality, Billie Burke was the incarnation of good fellowship and good humor, with or without his greasepaint. I have heard old time circus men . . . take the measure of Billie Burke's greatness. According to these connoisseurs, he was not as nimble of wit and quick at repartee as Johnny Patterson, "the Rambler from Clare;" he did not have as plastic a "mug" as Whimsical Walker; he was not as fine a leaper as James Murray; he was not as expert a pantomimist as Francois Kennebel; and he could not sing the conventional "clown song" as sonorously as Tom Barry; but he could do everything well that each of these clever fellows specialized in. In short, he was the most versatile man of them all.

During the '80's he alternated as a professional fun maker between the respective circuses of Phineas Taylor Barnum, William Cameron Coup, and "Father Adam" Forepaugh. His last appearance in New York was in 1892 on the stage of the Academy of Music in a Christmas Pantomime, "Cinderella." Fanny Ward was the lovely heroine. Billy Burke played Pantaloon in the harlequinade to the clown of George D. Melville, the Harlequin of Auguste Siegrist, and the Columbine of Edith Craske.

Clowns of the Billy Burke type are verily an extinct race nowadays. This, without any disparagement of the many clever men in the employ of the estimable Messrs. Ringling. There are plenty of talented fellows with the heaven-born gift of humor and the pantomimic instinct to make it tangible; but their efforts are badly handicapped by the conditions under which they work. The subtle pantomime of "Slivers" Oakley and the drolleries of "Spader" Johnson count for almost nothing and pass unappreciated on the immense hippodrome track encircling three rings and two elevated stages. Billie Burke in one ring was irresistible. He had the concentrated attention of everyone in the audience. "God rest you, Billy Burke!"

Daisy Belmont, the lady rider on Sells Bros. Circus World Museum collection.




MILLER BROS'
& ARLINGTON
101
RANCH
1 Day
Only
BERKELEY
GROVE STREET
SHOW GROUNDS
FRIDAY
APR.
26
REAL
WILD WEST